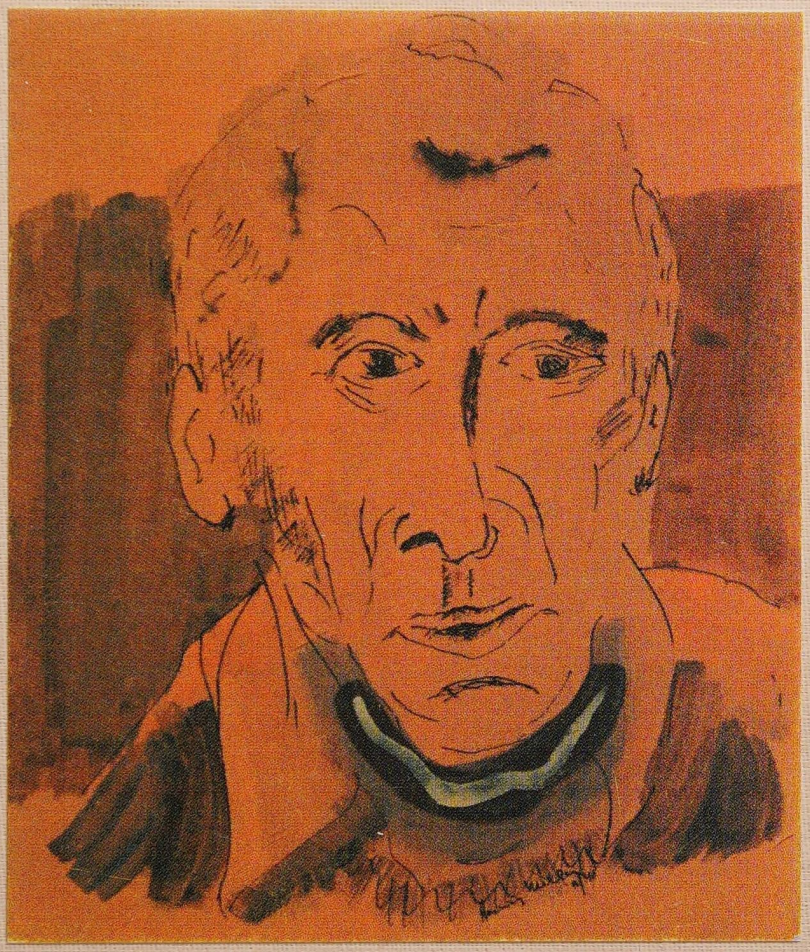
New Anatomies



Tracing Emotions in Henry Miller's Writings

New Anatomies

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Amy M. Flaxman

Bern Porter Editions

Belfast, Maine New York, New York

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Amy M. Flaxman

Amy M. Flaxman

For My Parents

Warm Hearts

Open Minds

Souls Intertwined

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Grateful acknowledgement of the ceaseless
encouragement of my parents—
my father who always looks in one more book
and around one more corner and
my mother who knows just when
to say, "It's enough!"
What a glorious pair.

Amy M. Flaxman
December 1999

New Anatomies

Tracing Emotions in Henry Miller's Writings

Amy M. Flaxman

What Henry Miller Said And Why It Is Important

Over the years from among all the words, the situations, the events, many will redescribe, many will remember this sequence, that scene, another episode; others will write, pay tribute, deride, criticize, imitate, be influenced, read, reread as others applaud, rewrite, fundicate, expand, elaborate, editorialize, comment, cross-file, index, catalogue and annotate. From the root comprising his initial billion words an overwhelming several billion more will multiply at the hands of countless others until in the resulting morass of verbiage the essential even simple, unsuspecting but all significant core will still remain undisturbed, even lost:

1. Sex is everywhere.

A. It is in the

air
bees
birds
city
country
earth
food
news
town
trees
streets
water
bed
songs
clothes
cars
factories;

Bern Porter's ode to Henry Miller written in the early sixties.

	boys husbands males man		clean enjoyable fun good healthy
B. And in	females	2. *Sex is*	innocent
	girls wives woman		pleasurable pure natural normal wholesome.

	boring damaging dangerous degrading dirty disgusting dull		shameful sinful stupid taboo unclean
3. And sex is not	evil	*not*	undesirable
	filthy hazardous hostile illegal immoral monotonous revolting,		unethical unnatural wanton wicked wrecking.

Contrary to the law, the church, the state, the tradition,

argue
discuss
dream

		give	
		have	
	can	indulge	
	does	partake	
one	must	perform	it.
	should	play	
	will	read	
		receive	
		share	
		sing	
		speak	
		think	
		write	
		wish	
		desire	
		drive	
		power	

More important the urge to fornicate (by whatever means) cannot be appeased, chastised, cheated, corrected, daunted, dazzled, deafened, debased, debilitated, disburdened, decontrolled, decreased, decrepited, deflected, deformed, defrauded, degraded, denied, devoured, diffused, diminished, dimmed, disappeared, disappointed, disapproved, disarticulated, disassociated, disbanded, discarded, discerpted, disciplined, discontinued, discounted, discouraged, discreted, discredited, disengaged, disentitled, disgorged, disguised, dishabitu-ated, disjected, disjoined, dislodged, dismembered, dismissed, disobeyed, disobiliged, disordered, dispersed, displayed, dispirited, dissolved, dropped, eluded, emasculated, erased, expurgated, estenuated, extinguished, extirpated, extracted, fecundated, feigned, fixed, fooled, frustrated, guided, hood-winked, ignored, improved, killed, overawed, placated, repressed, restricted, reversed, shattered, sublimated, substituted, transferred, tricked, thwarted, untangled.

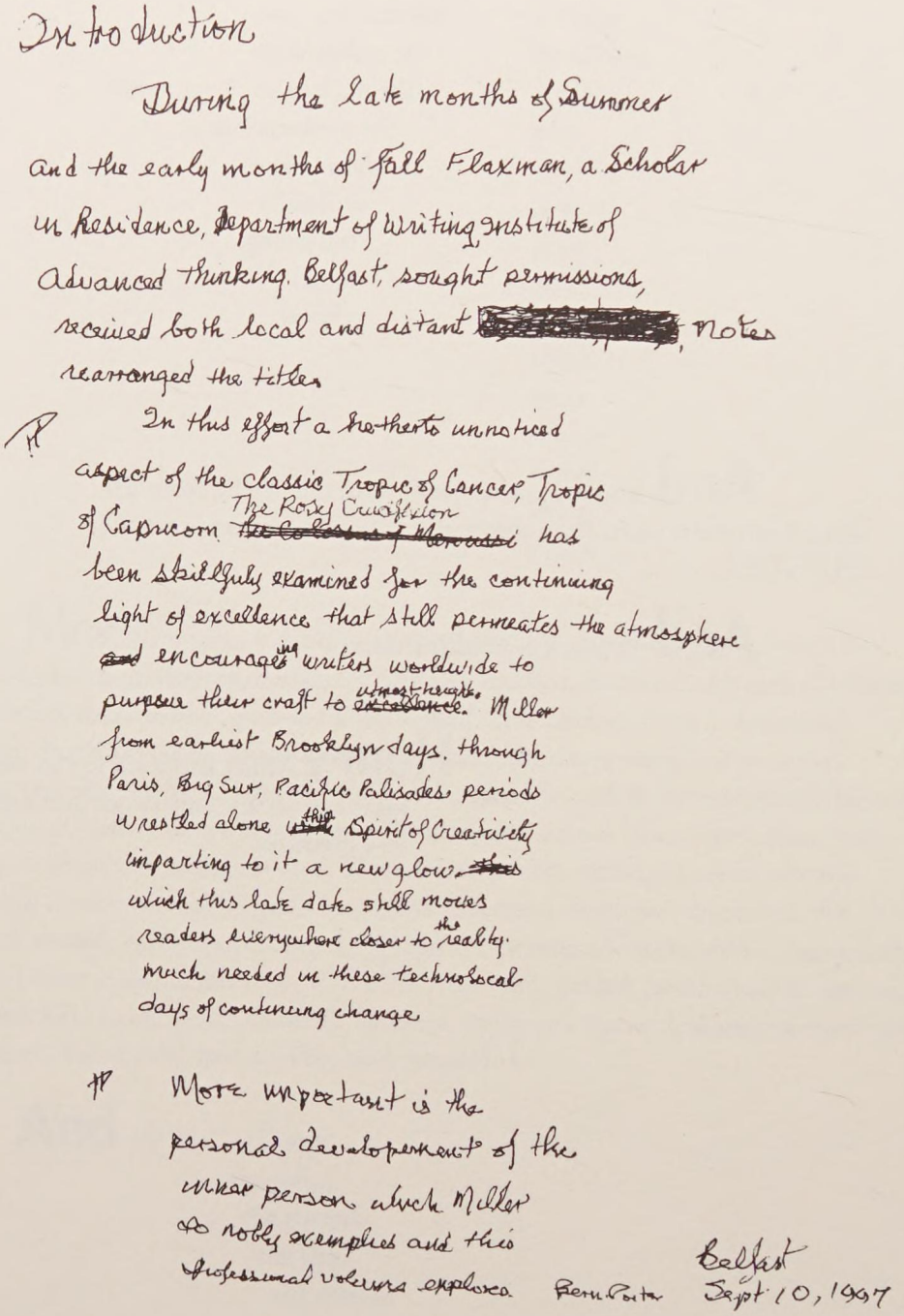
And all this the lawyer,
the judge,
the sheriff,
the jailer,
the censor,
the custom,

the minister,
the teacher,
the politician,
the doctor,
the commissioner,
the young,
especially
the young,
must
know.

And know it not so much from the parent, from the cleric, from the teacher, from the medic as from an expert impartial OUTSIDER.

And in absolute confirmation.

Henry Miller treats sex for its own sake; neither apologizes nor glorifies its expression.


Introduction

During the late months of Summer and the early months of Fall Flaxman, a Scholar in Residence, Department of Writing, Institute of Advanced Thinking, Belfast, sought permissions, received both local and distant [redacted], notes rearranged the titles.

In this effort a hitherto unnoticed aspect of the classic Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn ~~The Colossus of Maroussi~~ The Roxy Crucifixion has been skillfully examined for the continuing light of excellence that still permeates the atmosphere ~~and~~ encourages writers worldwide to pursue their craft to ~~excellence~~ utmost strength. Miller from earliest Brooklyn days, through Paris, Big Sur, Pacific Palisades, periods wrestled alone ~~this~~ Spirit of Creativity imparting to it a new glow ~~this~~ which this late date still moves readers everywhere closer to the reality much needed in these technological days of continuing change.

More important is the personal development of the inner person which Miller so nobly exemplifies and this professional volume explores.

Ben Porter
Belfast
Sept 10, 1997

A manuscript version of the publisher's introduction to *New Anatomies*.

Introduction I

During the late months of Summer and the early months of Fall Flaxman, a Scholar-in-Residence, Department of Writing, Institute of Advanced Thinking, Belfast, sought permissions, received both local and distant notes, rearranged the title.

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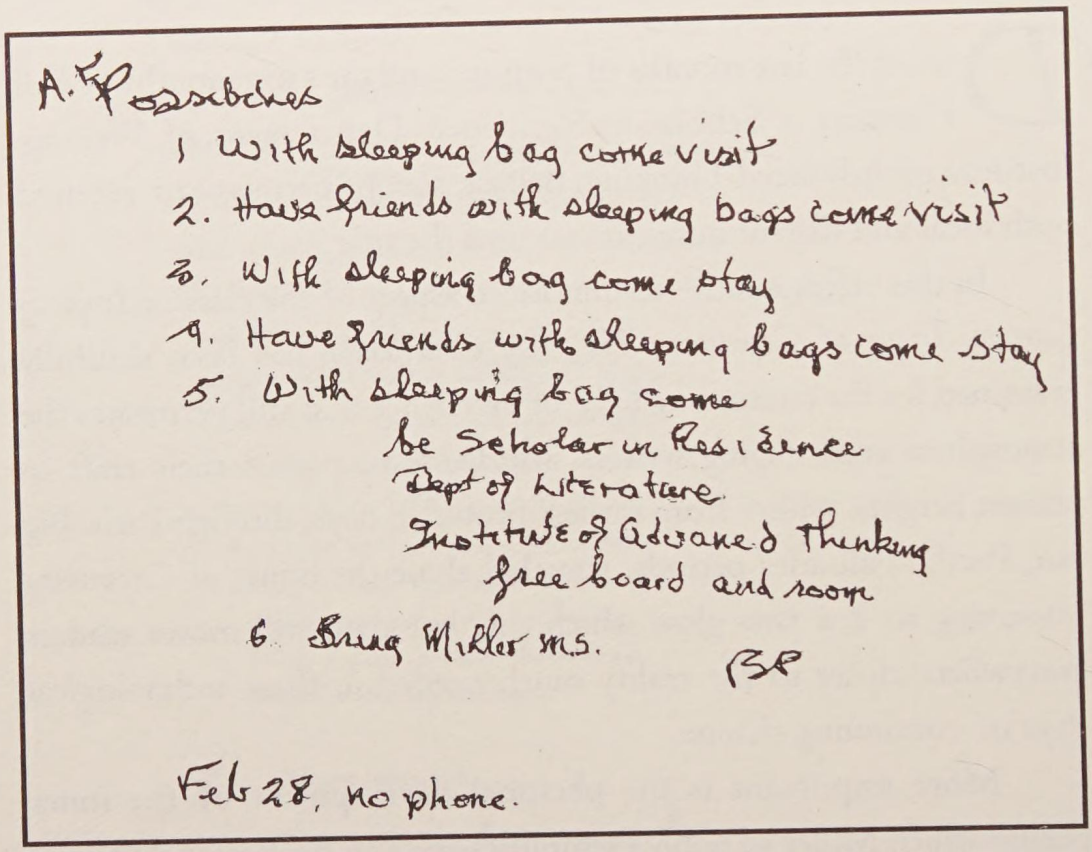
More important is the personal development of the inner person which Miller so nobly exemplifies and this professional volume explores.

Bern Porter
Belfast, Maine
September 10, 1997

Bern Porter
8-14-00


A. Possibles
1 With sleeping bag come visit
2. Have friends with sleeping bags come visit
3. With sleeping bag come stay
4. Have friends with sleeping bags come stay
5. With sleeping bag come
be Scholar in Residence
Dept of Literature
Institute of Advanced Thinking
free board and room
6 Brian Miller m.s.
BP
Feb 28, no phone.

1997 invitation to the author to come to Belfast and be a Scholar-in-Residence.

Introduction II

Bern Porter, at the age of eighty-seven, resides in Belfast, Maine, a town of six thousand residents. He presides over the Institute of Advanced Thinking and a wonderful sculpture garden. He continues to write, publish, and have a say in local politics.

One of his recent booklets—*Questions About Henry Miller That No One Ever Asked Me–With Answers*—closes with the following message:

> The Institute of Advanced Thinking (no phone, no fax) 22 Salmond Street in Belfast, Maine (04915) set up a *Society for the Acceptance of Henry Miller in World Literature.* There are no dues, or memberships–only appeals to all and sundry to do their part with foreign correspondents and extensive reading promotion worldwide.[1]

These words were a signal to me. I first became aware of Bern through *The Happy Rock,* an inspired collection of essays on Miller which he edited. A few years later, in Berkeley, I stumbled upon the delightful and insightful Schevill biography *where to go, what to do, when*

you are Bern Porter. When I responded to Bern's round-up of Miller supporters I wrote to a man I had not yet met, but in many senses I already knew.

While doing graduate work on Miller at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill I received wise guidance and energetic support from my advisor—Professor William Harmon. However, in the course of my research since then, I have noticed the non-acceptance of Miller's writing even these sixty years after the original publication of *Tropic of Cancer* in Paris and thirty-five years after the relaxed obscenity laws finally allowed it to be sold in this country.

Miller's work is rarely included on the usual academic reading list even while other sexually explicit literature has become standard. The innovation of Miller's writing ought to entitle him to a place in the modernist movement, his influence on, at least, Kerouac should include him in a course on the Beats, both birth and breeding make him a member of the New York writers' club, and his accomplishments as an author should certify him as one on the roster of great twentieth century Americans. In a recent catalog for The New School in New York City—one of the most liberal adult education centers in the country—Miller appeared only in a group with Nin and D. H. Lawrence as the starting point for a class on contemporary erotica.

Popular culture shows no signs of forgetting Miller. The younger generation of admirers have met him solely through his work and the memory of others. Collections of his letters, manuscripts, and first editions of his published works are gathered by an amazingly diversified group, which includes educators, writers, construction workers, and stars of rock and film.

In the forties it was the poets, among them James Schevill, William Carlos Williams, and Bern Porter, who acknowledged Miller

the writer as renegade. Now it is the musicians who go beyond the critics to acknowledge the effect Miller has had on society. Dan Bern's admiration is for his concept of Miller's sexual prowess. In his song "Marilyn," he tries to convince us that if *Henry* Miller, rather than *Arthur* Miller, had married Marilyn Monroe, she would have "lived a lot longer" thanks to Henry's *joie de vivre* (life-giving abundance of sexual energy). Jewel's "Morning Song" takes it one step further and in another direction as a woman suggests to her lover that he can be Henry Miller to her Anaïs Nin but she hopes they will get it right by staying together.[2]

Although no portrait of Miller is included in the gathering of literary elite depicted on the café walls of the Barnes and Nobles bookstore chain leaping across the United States, he did gain the penultimate acceptance in popular culture of the 1990's when *Tropic of Cancer* was featured in an episode of television's hit sitcom *Seinfeld.* Documentary films starring Miller as himself have been made, most notably by Robert Snyder. In the realm of big stars and wide release Miller made a cameo appearance in *Reds. Henry and June* introduced the Miller/Nin/June triangle to new audiences and refreshed the minds of old Miller fans.

A feature-length film version of *Tropic of Cancer,* produced and directed by Joseph Strick, appeared in 1970. Although featuring Rip Torn and Ellen Burstyn it did not meet with critical acclaim. Strick had put up a good fight to have the original X-rating changed to the more easily marketable R-rating. Twenty-seven years later the film was released in home video form with the NC-17 rating.

Miller's influence is felt on a popular level throughout the world as his works have been translated into many, many languages. Japan has its own Henry Miller Society. Recently *Tropic of Cancer* was assigned

#50 on Modern Library's list of "One Hundred Best Novels of the Twentieth Century"—probably the only instance in which Miller has been ranked as mainstream and midstream as well. The Henry Miller Memorial Library was founded by Miller's friend Emil White and sits up along Highway One in Big Sur, California—Visitors Are Welcome.

In a 1962 interview given in Minnesota, Miller admits that he would rather be appreciated by the youth with their vigor than by a group of stodgy academicians. Actually, at least one honor of the world of the establishment was coveted aloud—the Nobel Prize in Literature. Although this was never bestowed upon him he was invited to become a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters and accepted in 1957.

Certain of Miller's supporters fall into a category all their own — between academia and popular culture. Norman Mailer became a member of the National Institute in 1967. He originally held off joining because authors such as Nelson Algren, James Jones, William Burroughs, and Henry Miller were not invited to join. After he decided to join anyway he was delighted to find that Miller was indeed a member. Mailer's 1971 *Prisoner of Sex* continued a debate begun by Kate Millett in her *Sexual Politics* (1970) in which, as a feminist critic, she takes on the writing of both Mailer and Miller.

In 1993 Erica Jong, author of *Fear of Flying* heralded by Miller himself as the "female *Tropic of Cancer*" (*NY Times*), paid homage to Miller with *Devil at Large*, a biographical, critical memoir. A tip of the hat to her friend, Henry, also appears in her 1997 *Inventing Memory*. When one of its characters arrives in Paris in April of 1931 she writes in her journal "One ragamuffin in particular, a certain H. Valentine Miller of . . . Brooklyn, and Yorkville and Greenwich Village, arrived. I decided to stay."[3]

Gore Vidal, in a review of *Sexus* in 1965, wonders at the possibility of all that Miller writes being the truth when it seems to him it is mostly ego; however, he ends by expressing his gratitude to Miller for his role in the social revolution grouping him with Havelock Ellis, Alfred C. Kinsey, and Marie C. Stopes. In a review of the MacNiven collection of Durrell-Miller correspondence, Vidal expresses his appreciation of the two authors whose personalities lent so much "cheer" and "originality" to the twentieth century.

Bern Porter persists in doing everything possible to promote scholarship on Henry Miller. *New Anatomies* is his latest publishing venture. He continues to be supportive of artists of all kinds, putting them up and putting up with them at his Institute and publishing their work in his *Bern Porter International*–a bimonthly periodical.[4]

Bern's response to my first letter was so welcoming that I drove five hundred miles north to Belfast, Maine in a "wicked" snowstorm just six weeks after first contacting him. I spent the summer of that year as Scholar-in-Residence at the Institute of Advanced Thinking–Department of Literature. Quite a bit of my work was done in Mr. Porter's sculpture garden. After my summer in residence there, I'm never far from his house and garden. When I question my purpose or the worth of my endeavor I recall the feeling of acceptance which emanated from Bern as he said "Well my dear, I'd like to publish that manuscript." What a blessing upon my head.

I had the privilege of showing an original copy of *The Happy Rock* to Bern and asking him a question about its layout. He carefully turned each page and repeated the name of the author of each piece with sometimes a brief comment or at least a smile of recognition. At last, he looked at the table of contents and said, with a hint of regret in his voice and a twinkle in his eye, "There's nothing by me here." My reply

was "But Bern, you made the whole book." The smile I received then was one of the great joys of our joint venture in creating the present volume.

[1] For a list of Bern Porter works published by Roger Jackson write: Roger Jackson, Publisher/ 339 Brookside Drive/ Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105. To write to Bern Porter or the Institute the address has been changed to 50 Salmond Street—it's a long and civic story.

[2] Dan Bern's song "Marilyn" appears on the CD *Dan Bern.*
Jewel's "Morning Song" appears on her CD *Pieces of You.*

[3] Erica Jong, *Inventing Memory*, p. 97.

[4] Bern Porter International can be ordered by writing: N. Bernstein & S. Holtz/ PO Box 553/ Royersford, PA 19468.

Introduction III

Henry Valentine Miller was born on December 26, 1891 in an area on the upper east side of Manhattan known as Yorkville. Having already written some pieces but not yet the work that would make him a major author of the twentieth century he left New York for Paris in 1930 where his life as a writer really began. While there he wrote *Tropic of Cancer*, which was to make him so infamous, and change so many lives. Eventually it was published in September, 1934 by Jack Kahane with 5,000 francs supplied by his equally infamous and literate love, Anaïs Nin. James Laughlin of New Directions, Miller's first American publisher, brought out *The Cosmological Eye* in 1939 and *The Wisdom of the Heart* in 1941. Miller went on to have many other of his volumes published, but at first, as for so many writers as they start out, and especially so for Miller because of his unusual style and subject matter, he relied on the smaller presses.

Bern Porter was born on February 14, 1910 on the upper east side of the United States in Houlton, Maine. So far he has been named an artist, publisher, mail lover, nuclear physicist, eccentric, and by a select few "dear." When he traveled to Paris in 1937 he met Anaïs Nin and began to read Miller's work although, at this time, he did not get to meet the man. He was infatuated with Nin, and drawn so strongly to

Miller's writing that he was determined to make more of his work available to the public.

The two men, Miller and Porter, finally came face-to-face in California. The author was fifty-two and his would-be publisher was thirty-four. At the time, Porter was a member of the Manhattan Project team. Although he worked and resided in Berkeley he traveled for the government to Oak Ridge, Tennessee. On one of his trips from the South back to Berkeley he stopped in to visit with Miller at his home in Beverly Glen. Miller made several moves within California around this time. On April 21, 1944 he writes to Anaïs Nin with the letterhead "Address now: Big Sur, CA":

> "Now I come to Bern Porter. . . . I will tell you all I can. He came to me at Beverly Glen one day a few months ago. Said he wanted to print something of mine, anything available. He was young, rather alert, I thought, and at first I made no effort to help him. When he returned to Berkeley . . . he wrote me. Somehow then I woke up. And since then I have had much to do with him, by correspondence. He is a most ardent disciple of mine, I suppose I should say." (*STH* 325) [1]

Out of the meeting of Miller and Porter, several creations were born. By the time of the above-mentioned letter Porter had already "sent to press three little things . . . " of Miller's. Also in 1944, Porter became assistant editor of a literary magazine founded by his friend George Leite. Other contributors included Durrell, Rexroth, Fowlie,

Patchen, and William Carlos Williams. Leite and his wife together with Porter would visit with Miller in Big Sur. Eventually Miller and Anaïs Nin were contributors to *Circle*. "I'd just write: Henry, we're a little low here in research, gonna break down the equipment so there'll be a lull for a few weeks, I'll be down. He was sitting there in need of someone and I showed up at the right time. I learned many things from him and one of them was to enjoy what we have" (*Sounds* 86).[2]

Porter was no novice to the art of publication. At the tender age of ten he began making books.

> Up in Maine my problem was the simple act of reproduction. In those days, Xerox had not arrived and mimeograph was very crude—certainly too expensive for me . . . my problem was to draw them by hand. . . . it meant an edition of five copies . . . . My audience was a woman who lived down the street about four blocks, and when I completed a book, I would take it down to her, and she would give me a dozen eggs which I would take back to my mother. So I was making artists' books in those days . . . a sort of barter system . . . . (*Sounds* 74-75)

Although Miller's manuscripts presented different challenges to the publisher, they were met with the same creativity and moxie of his youthful endeavors. The chief reasons for the difficulty in publishing Miller in the forties were, of course, his choices of language and subject matter. The first publication was *What Are You Going to Do About Alf?*

and, as Porter describes in a letter to George Snell of the *San Francisco Chronicle* dated December, 1946: "Four days after its publication it was seized and fourteen words had to be obscured by hand. It was only a twenty-one page 3" x 4" item . . . and published in an edition of 730 copies. . ."(*Sounds* 77). Porter's biographer, James Schevill, adds: "On sick leave in 1944 from Oak Ridge, he returned to Houlton, Maine, for a visit and spent many hours at his grandmother's cottage on Nickerson Lake, blacking out by hand forbidden words in *What Shall We Do About Alf?* [sic] "(*SCH* 81).

Porter explains that in order to keep the government off track this first Miller-Porter publication was printed in Knoxville, Tennessee, but bears Berkeley as the place of publication. Nevertheless, his Miller titles continued:

> ". . . A numbered, autographed edition of . . . *Plight of the Creative Artist in the United States* followed from Knoxville-Oak Ridge address but with the Berkeley imprint. Being [one] of Miller's first self-illustrated volumes, it likewise commands fancy prices . . . . *Semblance of a Devoted Past*, printed in New Jersey, brought many praises by New York book designing clubs, and was judged one of the finest things of its kind produced during the war, as was the Henry Miller *Miscellanea* printed for me by Greenwood Press in San Mateo. . . ." (*Sounds* 77)

Besides the problem of the government censorship, Porter needed to be especially surreptitious as a government employee during wartime.

He was not permitted to travel alone. As a member of The Manhattan Project, a group of 125,000 people, he was not one of the elite few who knew the truth about the project.

> Leaving the dining room of the Faculty Club, University of California, after a more than pleasant lunch, I entered the Club's lounge, picked up that morning's edition of the *New York Times* to read not only that a bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima but also exactly what I had been doing with my life and talents the past four years at Princeton, Oak Ridge, Berkeley. . . . Myself, I am still numb after thirty-seven years . . . . (*Sounds* 127-8)

Porter eloquently apologizes in several places in his writing for the contribution he made to the nuclear attacks on Japan. He apologizes in his daily life by the way he lives—sparsely. When the tragedy is mentioned to him he goes to a place within himself of deep remorse and pain.

> . . . of course my confessing does not help in any way, it is too late—the monster is permanently out.
>
> War is a mental disorder of the highest order, a public manifestation that all who arrange, direct, participate are madly deranged. The insanity touches us all and we have nowhere to go. (*Sounds* 128)

Miller expresses his anti-war sentiments most profoundly in *Murder the Murderer*. For all of his admiration of a display of energy and passion he is specifically opposed to the death of individuals caused by a war of governments and what amounts to the mechanization of hatred.

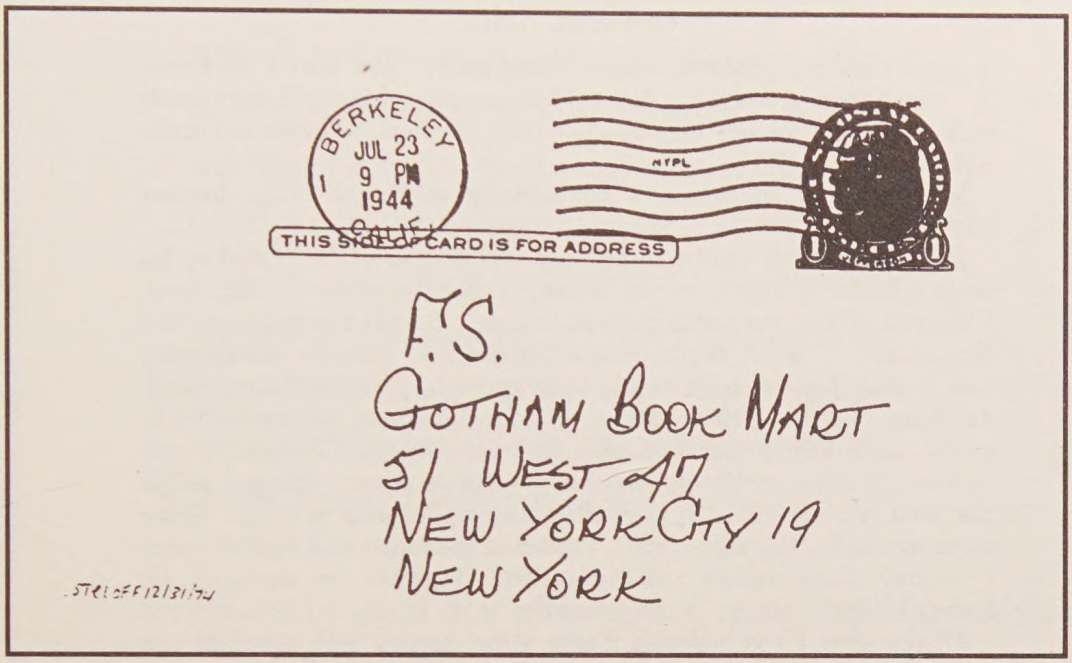
Porter refers to *Murder the Murderer* as "one of the greatest anti-war satires ever written." As a publisher, he could not use his real name on the piece when he offered a reprint in October of 1944 and used the added precaution of a disclaimer stating that the publisher did not share the views of the author. Apparently this subterfuge did not work, for a year and a half later he writes to Snell that the publication of *Murder the Murderer* caused FBI investigations of both Miller and himself.

Porter was deeply affected by Miller's ideas from the first books he read in Paris but it was the pacifist views in particular that influenced his life: " 'My involvement with Miller contributed to my sense of guilt about the development of the bomb because I felt I hadn't listened to him . . .' " (*SCH* 89).[3]

In a letter to Anaïs Nin of June 8, 1944 Miller acknowledges the affect he is having on the younger generation:

> All these young people are naturally a bit exaggerative, overenthusiastic, reckless, careless, and what not . . . I was that way too. . . . But they mean well. I know they are making quite a cult of me – I can't help that . . . . So many young people are that way; they begin by imitating their models. . . ." (*STH* 330)

Porter in his turn is quite open about his high regard for Miller:


BERKELEY
JUL 23
9 PM
1944
CALIF.
NYPL
THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS
F.S.
GOTHAM BOOK MART
51 WEST 47
NEW YORK CITY 19
NEW YORK
STELOFF 12/31/74
F.S.
Regret the continued delay on Henry's
"Plight" and "Semblance". Nothing can be
done but wait. Have just turned over to
a new printer (who promises delivery in six weeks)
the 100 page ms of Henry's "Murder the Murderer"—
An Excursus on War — a powerful document
with him at his best—. You could do yourself
a fine favor by making me an offer and
paying for 500 copies in advance of printing.
Item can go for $2.00 to the public. Prompt action
necessary. Bern Porter 2303 Durant Avenue Berkeley, Calif.
(no proofs or ms available).

Bern Porter writes to Frances Steloff of the Gotham Book Mart about purchasing copies of Miller's *Murder the Murderer* (1944).

Opening Note

I know nothing whatever about bibliography. Any that I have ever seen appeared useful but dull. Their compilers I thought were gentle souls too stupid for anything else but page numbers, volumes and cross-reference notes.

No matter. I undertook a bibliography of Henry Miller because I love him.

The University of California paid my way around while I called on his many friends. I kept them up nights. I dug into their packing cases. I fingered behind the books on their shelves. I copied notes, pages and dimensions. I visited twenty-nine states copying references, sticking my nose in other people's business and being generally grasping but congenial. Anything, everything Henry Miller. I wrote librarians, editors and book-stores—some helpful, some grouchy and water-logged. Post-cards, wax records and stolen stationery were sent to remote places. Strange people answered me, some in full; more often they replied only in clues. These drove me mad. Raving in fact. I called in specialists and academicians; I enlisted stenographers and lay-readers. Together we struggled on, getting bogged, mainly, in our own stew.

All the while I was besieging Henry Miller himself with questions and counter-questions. I spent hours with him at Big Sur, examining, cross-examining, pleading, brow-beating and belaboring his memory for every scrap, parcel and crumb. I wore him out. I read every letter, ms and notebook in his place.

I exhausted the specialists and broke down the post office.

The result follows: 82.3% complete.

If it is, however, rich in non-academic sidelights, future biographers may thank me. If they do not, then I am grateful to myself. A fair job, I say: thanks to all who aided—Henry Miller, Lawrence Clark Powell, Emil Schnellock, William Dewar, Huntington Cairns, Herbert F. West, George Leite, New York Public Library, etc., etc.

Of the vast lacunae represented by foreign magazines, obscure and defunct periodicals and smallish newspapers, I have nothing. World Slaughter No. 2 chased H. M. from Europe—he left behind trunks of manuscripts, clippings and reviews. Perhaps the kindly folk who thrive on bibliomania will excuse my rawness and ferret out these items, making needed corrections and countless additions. I shall pay them a small fee for their services. Possibly owners of H. M.'s water colors will also submit the size, title, date and inscriptions thereon for a listing of his art works. With everyone aiding a really significant bibliography will grow.

Bern Porter

2303 Durant Avenue
Berkeley, Calif.

[5]

A page from *Henry Miller: A Chronology and Bibliography* (1945).

> "The only way to get an education is to apprentice yourself to a master in science or art. My problem, as with most students in schools and colleges, was that I couldn't find a real master, although I had some good teachers in my education up through college. It wasn't until I was drafted into the Manhattan Project that I met scientists like Albert Einstein and Robert Oppenheimer and on the other side of the scale, writers like Anaïs Nin and Henry Miller." (*SCH* 20)

Porter devoted a good deal of energy to compiling *Henry Miller: A Chronology and Bibliography,* which appeared in 1945. This was a project that had been discussed with Miller from the start and with which Miller was quite helpful. The process was complicated in several ways. "Rarely had there been an important bibliography produced under such strange circumstances. What would government security agents have made of Porter's tour of twenty-nine states researching Miller's work. . . ?" (*SCH* 76-7) The guards, his constant traveling companions in those days, looked over his shoulder but apparently not far enough. Porter tells more about the process of this undertaking in the "Opening Note" to the Bibliography (See p. 22).

Porter had the help of Miller's friends, publishers, and collectors. Emil Schnellock, in his reminiscence of his friend Miller—"Just a Brooklyn Boy"—remembers the young Bern Porter's arrival at his New York Studio. " 'A slight, sensitive man confronts me. . . . One comes in so innocently—and then there is a change, disruption, upheaval. Who is this spirit with a flaming red shirt? He is it turns out, Bern Porter' " (*Happy Rock* 14). Porter alerts Schnellock to the growing importance

of his cache of Miller papers. "Rather disturbing, all this. I have lived so long with all these treasures of Henry's—and now I realize that they belong to the world" (*Happy Rock* 14).

Henry Miller: A Chronology and Bibliography created by Porter out of admiration for Miller and his writing has been a real service for subsequent researchers and bibliographers of Miller. Tracking down the small press and periodical publications would have become only more difficult with time. In 1993, Jackson joined with Shifreen to create an expanded version of the bibliography that Shifreen had compiled in 1979. As much as Porter's activities boosted Miller's financial situation and helped him to stay in print, the bibliography aided in its encouragement of collectors and scholars. An author with a bibliography attains a different status in certain circles.

The Happy Rock, a collection of tributes by various artists and friends, is the second volume that Porter created in appreciation of Henry Miller. A bit of debate as to the merit of the collection existed among some of the contributors and those who refused to contribute. The biographers' presentation of these disagreements vary as do their opinions of the book itself. What remains with certainty is pages of admiration for Miller's writing from friends and fans.

Kenneth Patchen, whose writing had appeared in *Circle* magazine and whose book of poetry Bern Porter would publish in 1946 had something to do with the uproar. His piece appears in the collection despite its dissenting tone. "1. Henry Miller is a very great writer and a very great human being. 2. The contributors to this book—with a very few exceptions—are so many sloppy-eyed nobodies. . . . for God's sake, Miller, the important thing is not to be liked by these people!" (*Happy Rock* 124).

The list of contributors, impressive to present-day critics, includes

Wallace Fowlie, Lawrence Durrell, and Alfred Perles. William Carlos Williams' poem *To The Dean*, written especially for the volume, praises the honoree's writing. Williams calls upon others to praise Miller and ends with "you are a very good influence."

Schevill tells us that the title, which some say Miller chose himself, came from *Tropic of Capricorn* ". . . in which Miller described the birth of identity as the true rock of self, the happy rock" (*SCH* 85).

The Happy Rock, with its slightly outsized measurements and varicolored paper, was designed as an art book. If one is lucky enough to hold a copy of this rare book with its heavy cardboard covers one recalls the descriptions of Porter's early childhood attempts at publishing. *Time* magazine announced the appearance of the second edition composed by "thirty-five internationally unknown intellectuals about a man no one ever reads, and all this on seven colors of paper . . . " (*Sounds* 78). Three thousand copies were printed but only seven hundred and fifty were bound for distribution.

About ten years ago, with hopes of a new edition of *The Happy Rock*, Mr. Porter approached Mr. Standish whom he knew was interested in publishing Miller's work. Porter graciously handed over the original package and the younger publisher was then on his own. Appearing in 1994, *Henry Miller: A Book of Tributes* incorporates twenty-three of the original twenty-six contributions into a large volume of over six hundred pages.

The Happy Rock, because it originally appeared in 1945, is seen as a marker in Miller's publishing history. The year was eventful all around and for obvious reasons one that changed Miller's monetary status. Now that the war was over his French publishers were able to send him more money—he no longer had to rely so heavily on the very small presses. Porter's had been a non-profit system where any earnings went

towards future publications. Although he had not been paying Miller royalties he gave him free books. In any case, after *The Happy Rock*, Miller felt that the arrangement with Porter was no longer beneficial. Porter believes "Probably it was my fault. I wasn't really set up to be a publisher. . . . I was using only my salary . . . I wanted to keep on publishing Miller's work, but it was a pipe dream since I couldn't afford it. So we drifted apart, but I never lost my affection for him or his work" (*SCH* 87).

Miller and Porter are both men of strong wills—evident in their writing, their accomplishments, and from first-hand testimonials of their acquaintances. Fortunately, they had their meetings, their collaborations, and parted with no great harm to either party. Miller appreciated Porter's interest in his work, his ability to make him some money, his tenacity, and his company.

Porter, happy to have the chance to spend time with Miller, and to advance Miller's writing in whatever way he could, appreciated the lessons he learned from his elder. Porter was there for Miller when he needed a publisher and promoter of sorts and Miller's open expressions of his ideology helped Porter deal with feelings towards a war he had unwittingly become so directly involved with.

As Porter remembers it:

> I was half-crazy because of my growing doubts about the uranium project. Miller was partly crazy because his constant struggle for money had turned life for him into a kind of aggressive game. He was always trying out strange money-raising schemes by mail. Indeed, I got a lot of my obsession with correspondence, my distrust

of the telephone, from Miller. (*SCH* 82)

As a dedication to *The Happy Rock* Porter wrote, "to the Freedom of the Press—should there ever be any." In 1946, the French government prosecuted Maurice Girodias on obscenity charges for publishing Henry Miller. This was the first such case since Madame Bovary was tried for the same reason one hundred years earlier. In June of 1961, a hardcover edition of *Tropic of Cancer* was published by Barney Rosset of Grove Press. In 1964, the Supreme Court reversed the Florida Superior Court decision that *Tropic of Cancer* was obscene and ruled that it could no longer be censored. Bern Porter, along with many others, was delighted with this news and celebrated with the composition of his poetic homage to Miller, *What Henry Miller Said And Why It Is Important,* which appears in the present volume on pages 2-5.

Publications by and about Miller are not the only testimonials that Porter has created. He worked with Lawrence Clark Powell and Miller himself to establish the Henry Miller Collection at the University of California–Los Angeles. The Porter editions of Miller's works discussed here do not constitute a complete list—for that it is best to consult the biographies and bibliographies.

Porter's publishing ventures were not restricted to Miller's output nor did he quit in 1945 with *The Happy Rock*. His goal was to see Miller's words, which were so meaningful to him, appear in print. This was no mere moneymaking process for him. In 1946, Porter describes his publishing company to Snell of the *Chronicle*: "In short, though we advertise in the *Chronicle* but have never been mentioned in its reviews, we are an established publisher featuring writers and artist who live and work within this immediate neighborhood [Berkeley]" (*Sounds* 78). Allen Ginsberg wrote to Porter thanking him for the "encouragement"

he felt knowing that Porter was independently printing these American writers. (*Sounds* intro.)

Porter, an artist himself, was not merely complimenting friends or promoting their work with these publications. He was contemplating the place of written and graphic art in society. He was not on the outside, a businessman or entrepeneur promoting a select few, but on the inside pushing up and out. In Berkeley, in 1946, he writes a treatise on publishing:

> Whenever contemplating the position of the serious creative writer in this maelstrom of coin and pulp, I grow delirious and speak glibly in extinct tongues. . . . there are ten West Coast writers waiting outside with their mss. . . . their fine work is begging for an audience. But who would buy an unknown? And where can I get the funds to publish? How can I give their books away? I'm delirious, I say. Or is it the world? (*Sounds* 82)

By 1950 he is becoming even more discouraged and echoes Miller's despair of the thirties, expressed in *Tropic of Cancer*, that no one dares to write the truth with powerful strong words and images (see present volume page 35). These emotions, perhaps recollected in tranquility, are retold with an immediacy in language of equal or louder decibel than the reality so as to be heard in this boisterous world.

Porter writes:

> Declaring readers are snobs or writers are similarly afflicted ignores a grievous condition. The

> indifference of the first and the incompetence of the latter are feeding the deadly inertia and apathy now engulfing us. (*Sounds* 90)
>
> . . .
>
> With the public dead and the creators lazy, it is difficult to see how we can return to primal feeling, uninhibited awareness and an honest urge to express, to communicate lucidly. Perhaps physicists could aid the situation—and save face—by blowing up words. (*Sounds* 91)

Porter with his intelligence and compassion, with his genius in both science and art (a rare find) adopts Miller's hope for literature and wishes that his own talents could further the cause.

According to the biographer and the year they describe, Porter was a boon, pest, friend, publisher to Miller. For his part, Miller writes to Nin at least twice in 1944 in a positive light about Porter: "I find him a conscientious worker, faithful, loyal and generous. What more can I say?" and in another letter: "He's quite an executive sort of fellow . . . and this is his hobby and excitement" [Publishing Miller that is] (*STH* 325/330).

In 1975, Porter describes Miller as:

> . . . the only person I've ever met whose written words are the exact duplicate of his spoken words. Here's this man who looks to me more like a dentist than a writer, a common looking guy, very shy, very bashful, but when he speaks it's like a torrent, like a waterfall, and there's no

> stopping him, no shutting him off. Fantastic imagery, word flow. And he writes the same way. (*Sounds* 86)

Porter himself does not like frames; often writing in columns and often using numbers, he is perhaps the organized scientist after all. Having adopted Miller's special number three it appears, at present and always, in his window in Belfast, Maine. Essentially his writing is not conventional and has a shoot-from-the-hip tell-it-like-it-is style—whether its subject be truth or what he wants to believe at the moment. The sculptures that he has collected—some made by himself and others by others—blur the line between visual art and literary art. The pieces are found art, much as his poetry is often found poetry, blurring the line between frivolous and essential.

Miller and Porter, who attempt to leap over the borders of society, are at the very edges in various aspects of their thinking. Both have been, simply through self-expression, unintentional innovators.

"All Over the Place" one of Porter's 1944 contributions to *Circle* magazine, discusses an idea as it pertains to painting but the discussion seems to be a metaphor for other areas of expression in art as well as for life. "There is no reason why the subject matter of art should be held fast as to the plane of a working surface or be forever restricted by frames when there are so many possibilities for explosion, action and variety within the composition and adjacent space" (*Sounds* 35-36).

When Miller does have his characters stand still as if for a photo they are encircled with silence—as in a floating frame—words do not ring them with their finite interpretations. In Porter's world everyday functional items are hung on walls, unframed, and freezers are used as filing cabinets. No lines are drawn—as no lines are drawn between the

sacred and profane in Miller's writing.

Highly intelligent and sensitive, Miller and Porter feel the pulses of their own lives and of their worlds, and try to express themselves with pulse beats so loud within them that the result is not literature as usual but an embodiment of the spirit of life.

[1] This and all subsequent citations of *STH* refer to the Gunther Stuhlmann edition of *Henry Miller: Letters to Anaïs Nin.*

[2] This and all subsequent citations of *Sounds* refer to *Sounds That Arouse me* —a collection of Porter's writing edited by Mark Melnicove.

[3] This and all subsequent citations of *SCH* refer to James Schevill's biography *where to go/what to do/when you are Bern Porter.*

Communication Through Writing

The spirit of Henry Miller's humanity suffuses his writing. He not only admits to his emotions but succeeds in describing them. In an autobiography of a man of the first half of the twentieth century, this is unusual.[1] In "Men and Affairs of the Heart," he writes:

> Men are the worst babies when it comes to love. Especially American men who have the worst time of all surrendering their precious egos. Because love implies a giving up of sorts, vulnerability, loss of power in one sense, the sense of self, of ego. (*Reflections* 93)[2]

Miller presents the moods of a human being, not a philosophical tract. He makes no differentiation of the relative importance of things, and so he sometimes seems absurd or uncouth. Since he gives as much attention to a glance at a prostitute as to time spent with his wife, people think he is demeaning the husband-wife relationship and aggrandizing the position of prostitute. To some this represents mistreatment of women.[3] Miller's realism reaches beyond anecdotal truth to what goes on in his mind. If there is any real order to his

writing, it is a representation of himself in words, and description of the thoughts and feelings of anyone else is minimal. Somewhat of an optimistic cynic, and often ornery, he is sometimes difficult to appreciate. The feelings he does not discuss are revealed in action and dialogue.

In *Tropic of Cancer* he writes,

> Up to the present, my idea in collaborating with myself has been to get off the gold standard of literature. My idea briefly has been to present a resurrection of the emotions, to depict the conduct of a human being in the stratosphere of ideas that is, in the grip of delirium . . . to erect a world on the basis of the *omphalos*, not of an abstract idea nailed to a cross. (*Tropic of Cancer* 220)[4]

In *The Clown's Grail: A Study of Love in its Literary Expression,* Wallace Fowlie says of Djuna Barnes, Martha Graham, and Paula Frijih,

> These three women . . . succeed in putting outside of themselves something that was very centrally of themselves. These works participate in consecration and sublimation. They are "histrionic" in a remarkably pure sense that few men are able to achieve, perhaps no male artists of our age, with the possible exceptions of Henry Miller, André Gide in a few of his volumes, and Proust and Joyce in all of their books. (145)

Something of the sort is what Miller seems to have meant by going off "the gold standard of literature," telling what really happens and what one really feels.[5]

> If there was a man that dared to say all that he thought of this world there would not be left him a square foot of ground to stand on. . . . If now and then we encounter pages that explode, pages that wound and sear, that wring groans and tears and curses, know that they come from a man with his back up, a man whose only defenses left are his words and his words are always stronger than the lying, crushing weight of the world, stronger than all the racks and wheels which the cowardly invent to crush out the miracle of personality. If any man ever dared to translate all that is in his heart, to put down what is really his experience, what is truly his truth, I think then the world would go smash, that it would be blown to smithereens and no god, no accident, no will could ever assemble the pieces, the atoms, the indestructible elements that have gone to make up the world. (*TCan* 224)

Henry Miller has got to be this man. Against the background of city streets, in public transportation, in the homes of family, friends, and strangers he reveals himself through his emotions and his emotions through his art. His work has no conventional plot into which must fit

sterilized or foreshortened ideas or emotions. He does not create or describe a "persona" or character who stands for himself but instead he directly recounts feelings and ideas. Miller does not know his protagonist any better than he knows himself.[6]

On the gold standard, one manipulates a medium of exchange, but Miller does not manipulate and his literature is not a medium. It is immediate: "The object of writing is to grow a personality which in the end enables man to transcend art."[7]

Some readers complain that Miller's candor dehumanizes sex, but one critic points out that Miller describes things that other people do, or at least, think about.[8] A comparison with true pornographic literature reveals the difference. Whether or not Miller's emotions seem "appropriate" to the *status quo*, these are emotions and they are included with the sex. Pornography, meant to stimulate, is a medium, a means to an end. Since what Miller writes is itself an end and not a means or medium, it is not pornographic.

Anaïs Nin and some collaborators were commissioned to write a book of pornography—*Delta of Venus*. The collector for whom it was written asked for a portrayal of sex without love. The authors found this request hard to fulfill. They felt that it was a bad idea and that he was missing the best stories by omitting the poetry. Nin writes,

> Dear Collector . . . You have taught us more than anyone I know how wrong it is not to mix it with emotion, hunger, desire, lust, whims, caprices, personal ties, deeper relationships that change its color, flavor, rhythms, intensities. (*Delta* xiii)

Miller protests against sex without passion. As in Dijon, a city of listless people, any existing energy is empty. Man is machine, according to Hobbes, but Miller is post-modern in his recognition of this modern idea and with the answer he has to his urge to overcome modernity.

> As I watch Van Norden tackle her, it seems to me that I'm looking at a machine whose cogs have slipped. Left to themselves, they could go on this way forever, grinding and slipping, without ever anything happening. Until a hand shuts the motor off. The sight of them coupled like a pair of goats without the least spark of passion . . . washes away every bit of feeling I have except the inhuman one of satisfying my curiosity. . . . I am . . . watching their movements with a cool, scientific detachment . . . . (*TCan* 129-31)

This is reminiscent of Bergson's opposing of vital and mechanical as the heart of comedy.[10]

Miller's positivism does not come from fantasy but from a belief in the acceptance of an all-encompassing reality. The list of labels he has been given—romantic, sentimental, transcendental, mystic, pornographic—is long and imperfect. Any categorical description of work such as Miller's must ignore an important part of his writing.

A quotation from Havelock Ellis used as an epigraph in *The Happy Rock* is indicative of Miller's romantic tendency. "We are of the stuff of the universe. In comparison with that fact morals and civilization sink into nothingness" (*Happy Rock* 126). One is reminded of Keats's lines: "When I have fears that I may cease to be . . . then on the

shore/ Of the wide world I stand alone, and think / Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink." *The Rosy Crucifixion* aims to provide an exploration of emotional wounds and, during the process, Miller becomes a romantic suffering the double injury of immaturity and maturity.[11]

Mona represents more than the ideal woman: she stands for all ideals, and the loss of her comes close to being total. Separation from her is like that first wound all over again but worse now in its familiarity and the suggestion of more to follow. What his first love introduced him to, Mona authenticates.

> When I realize that she is gone, perhaps forever, a great void opens up and I feel that I am falling, falling, falling into deep, black space. And this is worse than tears, deeper than regret or pain or sorrow; it is the abyss into which Satan was plunged. There is no climbing back, no ray of light, no sound of human voice or human touch of hand. (*TCan* 161)

The loss of Mona is great and he shuts himself off from the world, with his wound, but he recovers from it and learns to feel again. Worse than feeling bad things, he realizes, is feeling nothing.[12]

Tropic of Capricorn is dedicated *To Her*, probably Mona, and the epigraph is from *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, as though Miller hopes that his book will help people with their misery, as Abelard has done in the foreword to *Historia Calamitatum*:

> Often the hearts of men and women are stirred, as likewise they are soothed in their sorrows,

> more by example than by words. And therefore, because I too have known some consolation from speech had with the one who was a witness thereof, am I now minded to write of the sufferings which have sprung out of my misfortunes, for the eyes of one who, though absent, is of himself ever a consoler. This I do so that, in comparing your sorrows with mine, you may discover that yours are in truth nought, or at the most but of small account, and so shall you come to bear them more easily. (*TCap*)

Much of Miller's work is self-analytical. He does not complain merely to complain, he wants to learn from his experiences, and later on, when he feels healed, like Abelard, he wants to help others. The humor, wisdom, and adventure make the education of suffering palatable and even entertaining.

Some of the abundant energy released in Miller's writing is sexual and emotional. When the source and direction of his energy becomes apparent, then his feelings become understandable. Misdirected energy is the source of struggle and the process is self-perpetuating. Once we know him we realize that his frenetic behavior—when Mona's father dies, for example—is a result of sensitivity, not a lack thereof. Miller associates emotions with the spirit, and, confronting the death of Mona's father, associates the spirit with Judaism. He finds relief for his emotional confusion with a dose of advice from an old, Jewish man.[13]

> ". . . I'm so curious . . . get excited when I'm with your people. I would like to possess the

secret."

"Well, study your wife," said he.

"I do but I don't make her out. She's a mystery."

"But you love her?"

"Yes . . . I love her passionately."

"And why aren't you with her now? Why do you have the dress sent to her? Who is it that died?"

"Her father . . . ."

". . . No, don't leave her alone now. You will regret it, if you do. She is proud . . . . You must be soft and gentle . . . . Maybe she loves you now, but later she will love you more. . . . There is no love like that of the Jewish woman for the man she gives her heart to. Especially if he is of Gentile blood. It is a great victory for her. It is better for you to surrender than to be the master. . . ."

I was so excited by this unexpected excursus that I had to interrupt his speech.

"Yes, I know," he said. "I know how you feel. You see, we know all about you—but you have everything to learn about us. . . . We live not in the world, as it seems to the Gentile, but in the spirit. The world passes away, but the spirit is eternal." (*Sexus* 533-34)

Miller expresses his energy with lists, streams of words, strings of images, and free association. The chaotic fast pace gets adrenalin flowing, and, like the author, the reader may feel confused and incapable of

deciding which way to turn.[14]

Miller's style is free, and it eventually frees his soul from the wound. He hopes to free his readers from their pain and to have his song bring them the desire to sing: "This then? This is not a book. . . . The essential thing is to *want* to sing. This then is a song. I am singing" (*TCan* 2). As he bares his soul, the anguish of first-hand experience has lessened, and to him its reenactment in words becomes a song. As he relates *The Rosy Crucifixion* he suffers, pays the toll, reopens the wound, but by the end he is further from the torment and has helped others toward freedom. (This crucifixion *is* rosy.) Miller has learned that the best way to receive is to give, and the best way to let go, be free, is to connect. There is a strong rhythm to Miller's writing. First energy builds and then breaks, and there is an orgiastic release of emotion. In its cause and expression this rhythm is like a dance.

> It may be that we are doomed, that there is no hope for us, *any of us*, but if that is so then let us set up a last agonizing, bloodcurdling howl, a screech of defiance, a war whoop! Away with lamentation! Away with elegies and dirges! Away with biographies and histories, and libraries and museums! Let the dead eat the dead. Let us living ones dance about the rim of the crater, a last expiring dance. But a dance! (*TCan* 232)

In his emotional energy and free style, Miller resembles Whitman, his favorite American author (*Sexus* 42). Like Whitman, Miller is his work. Miller again emphasizes immediacy: the work is not a medium but a personal presence and an experience to be touched, not a means

to an end. Both writers want to share themselves, not only their imaginings, with their readers. The first lines of Whitman's *Song of Myself* could describe Miller's objectives: "I celebrate myself, and sing myself, / And what I shall assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you." Miller reveals his romanticism in his desire to transform the lives of others and in his assurance that this is possible:

> . . . the inhuman ones, the race of artists. . . take the lifeless mass of humanity and by the fever and ferment with which they imbue it turn this soggy dough into bread and the bread into wine and the wine into song. (*TCan* 229-30)

The desire to sing and dance, as communication, is a step nearer to immediacy. The most cultivated and the most primitive meet in expressive simplicity.

Life is what Miller wants. He defies inertia, solemnity, and mechanical consistency. He wants joyful acceptance. When forced to live in an inert environment—whether in his parent's house or in Dijon—he tries to accept the situation, but the life goes out of him. While living as he knows people should not, he knows that he must leave. Here realism prevails; Miller the character does not mature or accept any more readily than Miller the man. It is the thrilling song of life that he follows before and beyond anything. Total realism means total contradiction and to tell the whole truth exceeds the power of discursive language. Miller deconstructs all sorts of anatomies that make contradiction unavoidable.[15]

Orwell believes *Tropic of Cancer* to be the book of a happy man

(Mitchell 12). Miller is content and happy enough, but his is not a resolved happiness. It is, rather, one which carries him along until he can get his thoughts in order. That he is still struggling and still disconnected even in this book is revealed structurally in passages like the following, where his explosive prose on the downfall of civilization is directly juxtaposed with the resignation he feels on entering Dijon. He finds senseless progress and what he deems to be the senseless progression of his life as both annoying and unacceptable.

> *Forward!* Forward without pity, without compassion, without love, without forgiveness. Ask no quarter and give none! More battleships, more poison gas, more high explosives! More gonococci! More streptococci! More bombing machines! More and more of it—until the whole fucking world is blown to smithereens, and the earth with it!
>
> Stepping off the train I knew immediately that I had made a fatal mistake. The Lycée was a little distance from the station; I walked down the main street in the early dusk of winter, feeling my way toward my destination. . . .
>
> The first glance at the Lycée sent a shudder through me. I felt undecided . . . stumped to know what excuse to make. The only thing to do was to walk in with my eyes shut. (*TCan* 241)

This is not like the Henry of Paris, who, with an audience to satisfy, feels the need and the ability to keep his eyes wide open.[16] Even

when having sex, when the scenery is dark and negligible, his inner eye records images. But here he chooses to close the eyes that he keeps open through all kinds of horrors.

In the face of boredom or inertia, Miller is not comfortable or mature enough to be happy without an audience. Afraid of dullness, afraid of feeling the wound again, he rails against his environment to assuage the pain. When he has no company, no audience, he must vent the passion he still feels from his pain. Unable to control or redirect it for good purpose, he must let it go, blowing off steam like the smokestacks in Dijon. Himself a machine, he cannot control his emotions. "I was free, but my limbs were shackled. A democratic soul with a free meal ticket, but no power of locomotion, no voice. I felt like a jellyfish nailed to a plank. Above all, I felt hungry" (*TCan* 243).

In *Sexus* Miller would have found some way to get away from Dijon, but he is calmer and more resigned in *Tropic of Cancer*. His languor may also be the effect of the cities themselves: stultifying Dijon as opposed to the crazy and depressing New York which latter brought out his fighting spirit. The speed of each city is different. Miller needs connection with people to be happy. Peace is not a void. His insistence upon vitality amounts to a cry of pain for the missing peace he had with Mona.

> No, I wasn't going to get off into complicated eddies. I closed my eyes to sink back into that other clear stream which ran on and on like a silver thread. In some quiet part of me there was a legend which she had nourished. . . . Here it ran like a clear stream, all that really constituted my life. Here there was feeling, from bank

to bank. (*Sexus* 332)

The quietness of a dull life reminds Miller of the absence of this peace. He may not always be aware of it, but what he wants is connection with authors, religions, philosophies, and the very essence of people. These synapses are like an abbreviated form of his feelings for Mona.

Miserable in Dijon, where there are people but no spirit, Miller battles the sterility of automation. He can be happy wandering the streets of Paris, even alone, because he sees humane exchanges between people. In Paris he wanders, while in New York he has such intensity and purpose that it seems more like sprinting and, indeed, he often breaks into a mental and emotional gallop and a physical run.

Warmth and food—spiritual, sexual, emotional—are what he needs to give and receive. He is more consistent in his feelings towards people than in other elements of his work. His views on philosophy, religion and economics always seem borrowed or strongly influenced by other writers—they last for a while. His ideas of relationships with people reflect a maturation, while these other views seem haphazard. Life is analyzed with ideas but never serves as a mere background to them.

The concrete landscapes of Paris and New York, along with the character of their inhabitants, make up an integral part of Miller's work rather than a setting. The rhythm of New York pulses in its inhabitants as much as in their fast-paced transportation. New York street scenes are affected by the number of people and the velocity at which they live as much as by the elevated tracks and the streets rimmed with shops and homes interlaced. Everywhere, everything is happening at once.

Alone in Dijon, Miller feels a dread:

They looked a little crazy, with the cold and

> loneliness. The whole town looked a bit crazy when the blue of evening settled over it. . . .
>
> Coming through the high driveway into the quadrangle a sense of abysmal futility always came over me. Outside bleak and empty; inside bleak and empty. (*TCan* 250)

Walking the streets of Paris, Miller does not despair for humanity in quite the same way. In Paris he is assaulted by less soberly mundane images, and the street has character and is a companion. When he thinks of Mona he can miss her in the way one does while carrying on a conversation—flashes of a smile, of a feeling, moments spent together. The immediate need to sense life is fulfilled, the dread of loneliness is assuaged, and he can analyze the situation he misses.

> In a sense Van Norden is mad, of that I'm convinced. His one fear is to be left alone, and this fear is so deep and so persistent that even when he is on top of a woman, even when he has welded himself to her, he cannot escape the prison which he has created for himself. (*TCan* 118)

Perhaps Miller does not need or cannot feel the intense intimacy which Van Norden seeks—perhaps he is capable of being alone because, unlike Van Norden, he can face himself—perhaps he has merely found a way to avoid facing those feelings which are painful.

Van Norden reveals part of Miller's secret: "You talk to anybody, I notice you don't give a goddamn. Maybe you're right" (*TCan* 119).

They are each in their own prisons. Van Norden, fearing solitude, has locked himself away from himself. Content at this point Miller does not search for intimacy; he locks away those deep feelings that some would say he never had but which he supposedly experienced with Mona and cannot feel now because of the wound.

The depth of his love and trust for Mona explains the deepness of the wound. With Mona he found, or believed he found, the communication, acceptance, and unity he sought. "The wound that never heals" means that, by the loss of her, a part of himself has been cut away. Miller looks towards life and its maladies for a bond, a substitute for what he once shared with Mona, and with an instinctual need to find love in the world instead of the world in his lover.

Notes

[1] Friends of Miller's and contributors to *The Happy Rock* take notice of this accomplishment. Claude Houghton writes: "He hasn't just thought and chattered about it. It is heroism, nowadays, to feel. Heroism, because it challenges madness. It is only the man who feels chaos within to whom understanding of outer chaos is revealed; and it is only the man to whom this understanding is given who glimpses visions of a new humanity" (122).

[2] Miller, like D. H. Lawrence, Whitman, and the anonymous authors of Wisdom books, is inconsistent and contradictory. Organic and abundant, his writing cannot be discussed with the usual method of statement supported by brief quotation. In order to fairly present Miller's style and content the quotations in this paper may err on the side of overabundance, but brevity would surely be inappropriate.

[3] The social critic, Kate Millett, writes: "Miller's ideal woman is a whore. Lawrence regarded prostitution as a profanation of the temple, but with Miller the commercialization of sexuality is not only a gratifying convenience for the male (since it is easier to pay than persuade) but the perfection of feminine existence, efficiently confining it to the function of absolute cunt" (Millett 301).

[4] All subsequent references to *Tropic of Cancer* will be indicated by the abbreviation *TCan*. All subsequent references to *Tropic of Capricorn* will be indicated by the abbreviation *TCap*.

[5] Scholars place Miller in many different categories. Fiedler sees him as a transcendentalist, Sidney Finkelstein (Mitchell's anthology) as an existentialist, Gordon as a romantic, Widmer as a "rebel buffoon," John Tytell as a predecessor of the Beat generation, and William Harmon as a substantialist, essentialist, and an absolutist. Miller experiments with these trends, but does not lose his own style within them. He writes with no veil of literary distortion and, although he tests philosophies, he does not get lost in their jargon. The only idea which significantly affects his writing is "truth."

In his preface to *Sexus*, Durrell writes: "Miller has elected to shame the devil and tell the truth. . . . It isn't pretty, a lot of it, but then neither is real life. It goes right to the bone." Emerson is quoted as the frontispiece to *Tropic of Cancer:* "These novels will give way, by and by, to diaries or autobiographies — captivating books, if only a man knew how to choose among what he calls his experiences that which is really his experience, and how to record truth truly."

[6] Nelson considers Miller according to Frye's categories and it seems that she fits his work into the anatomy, autobiography, and confession. Frye himself writes: "More comprehensive fictional schemes usually employ at least three forms . . . " (Frye 313).

Karl Shapiro names Miller's form also: "Miller has furthered literature for all writers by ignoring the art forms, the novel, the poem, the drama, and by sticking to the autobiographical novel (which) he says in *The Books of My Life* . . . 'has replaced the great confessions. It is not a mixture of truth and fiction . . . but an expansion of and deepening of truth. . . . not flimsy truth of facts . . . but the truth of emotion, reflection and understanding, truth digested and assimilated. The being revealing himself does so on all levels simultaneously' " (*TCan* xvi).

[7] Durrell, *Balthazar*—cited in Hassan, ix.

[8] Miller's language is straightforward, his bluntness has been duly noted by all and appreciated by some. Thomas R. Gilbert was an Englishman who met Miller and wrote a piece for *The Happy Rock*: " . . . critics have suggested that it is the language of the common man. It is not. It is the language one would like to use on occasion, if one had the courage" (*Happy Rock* 63).

Orwell believes that Miller's appeal is that he talks about the reader: "In Miller's case it is not so much a question of exploring the mechanisms of the mind as of owning up to everyday facts and everyday emotions . . ." and that he uses the reader's language: "The callous coarseness with which the characters in *Tropic of Cancer* talk is very rare in fiction, but it is extremely common in real life . . . " (Mitchell 10).

[9] Nin wrote quite a bit of criticism of Miller's work, often in their personal correspondence. In the preface to *Tropic of Cancer* she expresses her appreciation of his realism: "Here is a book which, if such a thing were possible, might restore our appetite for the fundamental realities. . . . The restorative value of experience . . . is reasserted. There remain waste areas of unfinished thought and action, a bundle of shreds and fibers with which the overcritical may strangle themselves. Referring to his *Wilhelm Meister* Goethe once said: 'People seek a central point: that is hard, and not even right. I should think a rich, manifold life, brought close to our eyes, would be enough without any express tendency; which, after all, is only for the intellect!' " (*TCan* xxix).

[10] Herbert Faulkner West concurs: "Mr. Miller is in the great anti-intellectual tradition begun long ago by Jean Jacques Rousseau, and crystallized in our own time in the philosophy of Henri Bergson" (*Happy Rock* 112).

[11] Muller finds a resemblance to Thomas Wolfe beyond that ". . . they are both American to the core . . . . [Miller] also has much the same faults of fantastic excess; his picture of the true artist. . . . they both write autobiography, the endless story of this very romantic artist, and write his emotions twice their size" (317-18).

Shapiro notes the romantic influence: "What is this 'acceptance' Orwell mentions in regard to Whitman and Henry Miller? On one level it is the poetry of cosmic consciousness, and on the most obvious level it is the poetry of the

Romantic nineteenth century" (*TCan* xi).

Miller's suffering begins with his wound and illness becomes symbolic. Susan Sontag discusses disease as literary symbol in *Illness as Metaphor.* Consumption is a graceful death, tuberculosis expands, and cancer kills. "The source for much of the current fancy that associates cancer with the repression of passion is Wilhelm Reich, who defined cancer as 'a disease following emotional resignation—a bio-energetic shrinking, a giving up of hope' " (Sontag 22).

[12] In "The Pitching of Love's Mansion in the *Tropics* of Henry Miller" Friedman argues that Miller shut himself off from love, and thus: "In *Capricorn* he writes that 'whoever, through too great love, which is monstrous after all, dies of his misery, is born again to know neither love nor hate, but to enjoy. And this joy of living, because it is naturally acquired, is a poison which eventually vitiates the whole world.' (67-8) The *Tropics,* then, is not about redemption at all, but only about the death of love—and the irrevocable finality and waste of one man's spiritual suicide" (Mitchell 153).

Hassan concurs, and also cites Miller to prove his point: "Now buffoonery can be holy when backed by the power of love; otherwise it is merely a roguish expression of pain. . . . He confesses 'How simple and clear it all seems now. A few words tell the whole story: *I had lost the power to love.*' Indeed, all the games Miller plays with himself, prowling the city streets on an empty belly, are wild improvisation on that insight" (Hassan 101).

[13] "For Miller's affinity with the Jews is based on values held sternly in common: the feeling of alienation from American culture, the ancient awareness of pain, the yearning for intuitive wisdom, the need for remembrance, the glory of sensuous life" (Hassan 105).

[14] Mark Schorer was a witness during the trial of *Tropic of Cancer*: ". . . the theme is that the value of life exists in the act of living, that we live only in the instant moment . . . the language, the reason that I put so much emphasis on the energy of the language, is that one is made to feel that theme through the very language, that kind of exuberance" (Wickes 162).

[15] Oriana Fallaci reveals something about contradiction in literature in her interview with Jonathan Cott: "Listen . . . in . . . *Letter to a Child Never Born,* I have brought to such a paroxysm exactly what you're saying—a book that's the apotheosis of doubt. Every time the female character says something, she soon thereafter says the contrary of that, and then the contrary of *that* without denying the original statement. . . . Antithesis and synthesis occur here at the same time, all at once. The woman keeps contradicting herself, keeps being controversial with herself, and in the end she is terribly human" (Cott 11).

[16] Mailer not only recognizes Mona and Henry as actors, he believes that their role playing is proof of their narcissism (*Genius and Lust* 173-94).

Images of Emotion

When his emotions overwhelm him, Miller has trouble communicating his ideas. He knows what he wants but cannot think how to balance these needs and desires with those of others. The picnic scene from *Sexus* contains all the confusion and passion of his story (465-88). There are certainly deeper psychological ideas to investigate in his relationship with Maude, but basically they communicate more easily once the pressure of marriage disappears. Miller is no longer trapped; from the minimal characterization he gives to Maude it appears, now that she has lost Miller and is free from his confusing and threatening presence, that she can speak.[1]

On the outing Miller takes the time to work on his relationship with Maude. Stylistically, he uses this event to reveal more of the character he despises, perhaps he can hold back his disgust at last in an attempt to endow Maude with some depth. Their discussion has a blatant outcome—sex. By this point Maude has done her share of haranguing. Having argued in behalf of delicacy and correct behavior, having spoken her mind (the small mind Miller allows her) and submitted her complaints, she is ready for real communication. Maude and Henry lay down their intellectual barriers and communicate physically now.

During the picnic and the love scene that follows, their reasons

for having married are revealed. Their small understanding and great desire for each other account for much of their motivation. They communicate on a certain level with tears and sex. It is the child, with her simplicity, that helps them reach this stage of communication. " 'Kiss her again,' said the child" (*Sexus* 468).

The unresolved Maude relationship—along with other elements of his life, like his job and the economy—contributes to Miller's turbulent state. How much of the problem is Maude? The lack of understanding and increasing disgust for the woman and the marriage may result from other aspects of his life. Maude and Henry communicate enough to resolve their feelings and past together, but not enough to share their lives. Miller is certainly at his nastiest when it comes to Maude, but he cares enough about the relationship to apply his analytical tools:

> "Why can't you be like this always?" she said, after a brief pause.
> "I am," I said, "when I'm given a chance. I don't like to fight with you. Why should I? We're not man and wife any longer."
> "Then why do you treat me the way you do? Why do you always make love to me? Why don't you leave me alone?"
> "I'm not making love to you. . . . It's not love, it's passion." (*Sexus* 468-69)

Maude, for once, is not a petty, priggish character but a passionate woman defending her beliefs. She speaks with conviction:

> "You thought of nothing but yourself, your friends, your women. I was a fool to think you might change. You don't care about your child—you've hardly noticed her. You can't even restrain yourself in her presence. You'd take me in front of her and pretend that it was innocent. You're vile . . . I'm glad it's all over." (*Sexus* 466)
> "You haven't an ounce of loyalty or tenderness or consideration in you. . . . Here, take it!" she said shoving a sandwich in my fist. "I hope you choke on it!" (*Sexus* 467)

Two things are happening to Miller at once. The need to communicate and the need to escape, although jammed together, are rarely interwoven. Sometimes the needs nourish their host and sometimes they weaken him, but they are the motivation of his life. In *Tropic of Cancer* he struggles with his love for Mona and with his wound and begins to mend. Writing is part of the escape from his pain and Mona is part of his writing. He must escape her and the wound with his art intact. Throughout *The Rosy Crucifixion,* he struggles with expression, until he resolves it in *Tropic of Cancer.* Escape is necessary for the space and freedom he needs to write. The expression of his pain and confusion, after the fact, testifies to Miller's artistic genius. He has the ability to distance himself from himself, to see what he has been, and all the while he continues to wrestle with a grand passion that needs an outlet.

> I was like a slave who dreams of freedom, whose whole being is saturated with one idea: escape. Nobody could have convinced me then that if

> I were offered the choice between her and my dream of Europe I would choose the latter. . . . she herself who would offer me this choice . . . . It dynamized my love for her. . . . From that day on things moved on greased skids. Get married? Sure, why not? (*Sexus* 568-69).

Love is sharing. Miller and Mona connect through their desire to go to Europe. When they are most involved he continues to rebel against restraints and responsibilities.[2]

Miller's life is his story. By the time *Reflections* and other later works are being written, the "Miller" developing on the page has been reconciled with his life. In *Tropic of Capricorn* he already begins to look at his life as pattern: "Confusion is a word we have invented for an order which is not understood. I like to dwell on this period when things were taking shape because the order, if it were understood, must have been dazzling" (*TCap* 176).

Disorder permeates the universe of Miller's books, so that it remains impossible to pinpoint part of his work and say "this" is what he means. This disorder is part of the realism with which he depicts his growth towards emotional balance and maturity. In writing, Miller becomes comfortable with an honest emotional approach to reality and releases himself from the bondage of pain. He learns that to face one's reactions to life on a road to maturity is to be freer than to be an adult running away as if he were a child.

Although it seems chaotic, Miller's emotional state evolves.[3] The events recorded in *Sexus* occurred before those in *Tropic of Cancer*. In *Sexus* there is a tension and a need to escape. The tension in *Tropic of Cancer* is that he not "think"—he must keep busy and remain content.

Used to Mona's company, he is used to being alone—with her.

Miller describes his life as a proofreader:

> A world without hope, but no despair. . . . I'm up a blind alley, and it's cosy and comfortable. [Mona writes that she's coming.] How am I ever going to explain to her that I'm contented here? She'll say I've become a degenerate. . . . But I'm prepared for her this time. (*TCan* 136-37)

He may feel calm and content—the basic mood of *Tropic of Cancer*—but he remains passionate. Despite his placidity not all of his old desires have been resolved. Some of his words reveal the remaining turbulence, but sometimes only their rhythm reveals their essence.

"We have become so adjusted that, if tomorrow we were ordered to walk on our hands, we would do so without the slightest protest" (*TCan* 138). While, in *Sexus*, he fights against adjustment in work and personal relationships, here he accepts his job and his friends as they are. Content if he does not let himself slip into thinking about her who has caused him such pain. His feelings are so intense that he must stay at a certain emotional altitude, because, once he thinks below that level, unless he has a ready substitute, he thinks of her:

> There are days, nevertheless, when the sun is out and I get off the beaten path and think about her hungrily. Now and then, despite my grim satisfaction, I get to thinking about another way of life, get to wondering if it would make a difference having a young, restless creature by

> my side. The trouble is I can hardly remember what she looks like, nor even how it feels to have my arms around her. Everything that belongs to the past seems to have fallen into the sea; I have memories, but the images have lost their vividness, they seem dead and desultory, like time bitten mummies stuck in a quagmire. If I try to recall my life in New York I get a few splintered fragments, nightmarish and covered with verdigris. It seems as if my own proper existence had come to an end somewhere, just where exactly I can't make out. I'm not an American any more, not a New Yorker, and even less a European, or a Parisian. I haven't any allegiance, any responsibilities, any hatred, any worries, any prejudices, any passion. I'm neither for nor against. I'm a neutral. (*TCan* 137-38)

In *Tropic of Cancer* Miller's state is fragile, but he cannot last long holding his breath when he has such a great need to communicate. Orwell's article, published only about *Tropic of Cancer*, speaks of Miller's acceptance as he sits in a transparent whale belly and watches. Miller is in the belly, aware of it, and sometimes eager to get out.[4] His trip to Greece is an apocalyptic experience, after which, forced back to the prison of New York, he uses his redirected energy to communicate with those who thwarted him before. "Reunion in Brooklyn" represents an expansion of communication and a beginning of reconciliation. In *Sexus* Miller has a passion for life, and later in "Reunion in Brooklyn" he has a compassion for reality also.

Emotion drives his writing as much as its "characters." Although the characters are not always complete people, they are always more than just representations of collected idiosyncracies. Miller makes sure to endow them each with some feeling, and he gives back, through his writing, some of the insight he has had into their souls and his own. Even so, some critics say that his characters, especially the women, are shallow.[5]

Miller's energy and his escapades enliven his stories. Emotional scenes hold the less personal scenes, the sex scenes, and the speeches about philosophy, together. Miller uniquely combines a number of Frye's categories, and a single paragraph may be, by turns, adventure, education, confession, and—in at least two senses—anatomy.

In Miller's autobiography, each scene has significance beyond itself as it fits into the structure of the work. Although extracts out of context may be used to indict Miller on charges of pornography, obscenity, blasphemy, sexism, and much else; the same myopic procedure can be and indeed has been applied to practically any literature, including Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and the Bible. If we try to find Miller's opposite, a text of absolute innocuousness and virtue, say, we would probably find a "G"-rated Disney text that, with a minimum of ingenuity, could be shown to conceal, just below its unobjectionable surface, all sorts of sexual symbols. (Bruno Bettleheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* does just this for fairy tales.) Consequently, a Miller text, in which this author is called "Miller" and fucking "fucking," comes to seem clean, lucid, innocent, and ingenuous. Another type of work, such as Richardson's *Clarissa,* as D. H. Lawrence argues, may lack all the dirty words and graphic sex but still, since it is about nothing but sex, be insistently obscene.

It is difficult to write about Miller's work partly because his

rendering of emotion is so powerful. How does one objectify and dissect emotional rendering of emotion? His explosions of verbalized feeling become harangues. Sometimes these explosions are part of his struggle to write, overtaking his struggle to "figure things out," to express rather than interact. He is an actor presenting a monologue.

> Reflections of this order always excited me to the breaking point. Ten minutes of introspective reverie and I was bursting to write a book. I thought of Mona. If only for her sake I ought to begin. And where would I begin? In this room which was like the lobby of an insane asylum? Begin with Kronski looking over my shoulder? (*Sexus* 255)

Miller's essence lives in these few lines, his character compressed into a paragraph: Mona on his mind, thoughts of what he should do, jumpiness.

Tropic of Cancer describes Miller's life as content and yet halfway through the book he writes the following lines:

> One can live without friends, as one can live without love, or even money, that supposed *sine qua non*. One can live in Paris—I discovered that!—on just grief and anguish. A bitter nourishment—perhaps the best there is for certain people. (*TCan* 162)

There is suffering within the copesetic Miller as there may be tears within

a smile. The face which can be open with its expression of joy and love can be a barrier, no matter how thin, between suffering and the world audience. The image of the gaping wound comes to mind when one compares scenes of luxuriant love of Henry and Mona with the following scene of separation in Paris:

> . . . when I left her in New York . . . that same, sad, inscrutable smile on her face, that last-minute look which is intended to convey so much, but which is only a mask that is twisted by a vacant smile. Only a few days before, she had clung to me desperately . . . that sad, enigmatic smile which baffles me, which is unjust, unnatural, which I distrust with all my soul. And now it is I, standing in the shadow of the viaduct who reach out for her, who cling to her desperately . . . that same inexplicable smile on my lips, the mask that I have clamped down over my grief. . . . no matter how fervid my prayers, no matter how desperate my longing, there is an ocean between us; there she will stay and starve, here I shall walk from one street to the next, the hot tears scalding my face. (*TCan* 166)

Maude cries too. She cries when Henry tells her about Mona; a scene in their kitchen during which Henry strokes Maude's hair as he looks towards the future with optimism. The tears bring them closer to that distant peace. The child's response to Maude's tears starts a communication on the picnic.

On the train ride home some discord lingers and Henry harangues. Then:

> It begins to rain. It pours. Hail-stones big as bob-o'-links bounce from the pavement. The city looks like an ant pile smeared with salvarsan. The sewers rise and disgorge their vomit. The sky is as sullen and lurid as the bottom of the test tube.
>
> I feel murderously gay all of a sudden. I hope to Christ it will rain like this for forty days and nights. I'd like to see the city swimming in its own shit; I'd like to see mannequins floating into the river and cash registers ground under the wheels of trucks; I'd like to see the insane pouring out of the asylums with cleavers and hacking right and left. The water cure! (*Sexus* 471-72)

Rain, like tears, clears the air. Miller changes his attitude from "annoyed with life"—on the train—to "warm, cosy, and protective"—in the taxi. Now purposeful, he must protect the woman and child from sorrow and rain. Once they reach home barriers fall and love flows.

> We closed the doors and kept the gas burning to keep warm. Jesus, it was quite wonderful. It was like getting to know one another all over again. Now and then I got up and put my arms around her, kissed her passionately while my hand slid into her crack. She wasn't at all shy or balky. . . .

> "Was it my fault," she said, "that this never happened before? Was I such a squeamish creature?" She looked at me with such frankness and sincerity I hardly recognized the woman I had lived with all these years.
>
> "I guess we were both to blame," I said, downing another glass of elderberry wine. . . . [Miller to Maude] "I'll drink anything. . . if it will make you happy." (*Sexus* 475-76)

Maude and Miller are happier now.

Once Miller's relationship with a woman is no longer demanding or confining, when it no longer falls under the jurisdiction of society's norms, then he can be caring, open, and loving. Most significantly this applies to his feelings towards Maude and his mother. When he becomes a woman's equal and is treated as a mature and reasonable person, he responds in kind. Once he believes a woman sees him as worthy of her love and respect—as a *mensch*—he can see her as a complete human being and not as an obstacle to happiness.

Miller suffers because of Mona—she reduces him to a dog. In *The Rosy Crucifixion* he complains about New York, about the way people treat each other. A compassionate man, he suffers out of sympathy. In learning how to understand and control his emotions he also learns how to channel his compassion. Having been away from America and his mother and having suffered, partly because of Mona, he understands the suffering of others and offers help in the form of *The Rosy Crucifixion.*[6] His accusatory and rebellious stance against those who make him suffer has diminished and therefore he suffers less. The energy he saves becomes useful.

Now that he has found himself and his voice, in Paris, he has the emotional strength to be sympathetic and to open up and extend his thoughts and energies to others. To the many people he meets—Ulric, messengers, Fillmore, the prostitutes—he offers what he can. He needs a greater maturity in order to help the people closest to him, and in "Reunion in Brooklyn" when the inability to cope with the differences between himself and family members changes into sympathy this maturity is realized. Out of this new understanding comes some pain, accepted along with the love.

Tears are a visible manifestation of suffering. Miller sobs over an awkward scene with his daughter—he is uncertain whether she shuns him or does not recognize him. His parents and sister and their relationships make him cry in "Reunion in Brooklyn." To release feelings, and then reveal them in writing, demands warmth, courage, and trust. Tears are an acknowledgement of the fact that something has gone wrong; and, realizing this, he can now begin to correct the problem.

When we cry we release feelings, admit to ourselves that something is wrong, and that we need help. The social act of crying in public carries the weight of a "statement." Miller cries out for help and responds to the call of others in need:

> The sound of someone sobbing behind a shuttered window reduces me to ashes. I am not only moved to the depths, I am often sexually excited. A woman sobbing in the dark so often means a woman begging for love. I tell myself that her sobs will soon be stifled by a passionate embrace, I wait to hear the squeals and grunts which follow. (*World of Sex* 146)

His interest in sex aside, this is a confession of a sensitive man.

Miller has the strength and compassion to take charge when his friends are in trouble. He can help them find peace when they are choked by the chaos of their emotions. When his friend Fillmore is in trouble, "I listened to him quietly, thinking to myself that he certainly did need someone to pull him out of the hole he was in" (*TCan* 276). When he is calmer than another he can communicate well: " 'I looked at him easily, as though ignoring the appeal and, shoving the saucers aside, I leaned over on my elbow and I said to him earnestly: 'Look here, Fillmore, what is it you'd *really* like to do? Tell me!' " Fillmore's tears give Miller strength; the honesty and energy of emotion alert him to his tasks in life:

> [Fillmore] . . . made no effort to brush them [tears] away. He just let everything gush forth. Jesus, I thought to myself, that's fine to have a release like that. Fine to be a complete coward at least once in your life. . . . Great! . . . It did me so much good to see him break down that way that I felt as though I could solve any problem. I felt courageous and resolute. I had a thousand ideas in my head at once. (*TCan* 278)

Miller helps his friend out of the bad situation but cannot continue his generosity of spirit for long. He returns to the cynicism of other sentimental occasions (e.g., the train ride after the picnic) to re-erect the barriers as quickly as possible. He sends Fillmore off and then:

> . . . I thought for a moment of Ginette. . . . I

> wondered if his clothes would fit me. He had a raglan that I particularly liked. Well, by now he was on his way. In a little while the boat would be rocking under him. English! He wanted to hear English spoken. What an idea! (*TCan* 286)

He has distanced his friend by means of the ocean and also by means of the ridicule of Fillmore's wish confessed in moments of trust.

Miller has to learn to use his sensitivity and the energy he can get from it to have compassion. Mona's attempted suicide instigates ideas:

> I pinched myself, as if to convince myself that I was capable of feeling.
>
> "Yes, you are not made of wood. You have feelings—but they're misdirected. Your heart works spasmodically. You're grateful to those who make your heart bleed; you don't suffer for them, you suffer in order to enjoy the luxury of suffering. You haven't begun to suffer yet; you're only suffering vicariously."
>
> There was some truth in what I was telling myself. (*Sexus* 325)

The strength Miller used to keep himself together and apart from the wound, can now be used to communicate. By the end of *The Rosy Crucifixion* he has hibernated in the basement of Mona's house. He has been denigrated to a low level and communicates appropriately. "Woof! Woof!" is a yelp for help, a small cry.[7] Miller faces the world in *Tropic of Cancer.* In *Colossus of Maroussi* he embraces an entire culture.

In "Reunion in Brooklyn" he finally interacts on several levels with himself and others. He allows himself to care. A better perspective helps him understand his feelings. Time and space, travel and writing are an essential part of his process. Often it is his habits as a pedestrian that clear the thickest confusion. Tears become the expression of a struggle which is broken down by the pace of the streets.

Writers usually make metaphor to describe and elevate feelings. Emily Dickinson, conversely, uses metaphor to humble and domesticate these emotions. Miller occasionally takes loftier ideas and everyday duties and sweeps them aside with a harangue, pointing out the beauty and importance of the most basic elements of our lives.[8]

Dickinson uses everyday objects and events to explain her feelings. Miller uses the usual bustling scene of a city as background to his feelings. His emotions are so energetic that they seem to gather steam from the city and people around him until he has more energy than his surroundings and, then, his feelings must be verbalized. The harangues seem to represent the artistic process in which energy and ideas collect until—in a rhythm cognate to that of sex and other vital processes—they are released in words. He is involved with the everyday; that is, what occurs by chance during his day (not always especially ordinary). Every once in a while the substance that makes this everyday life meaningful, worthwhile, and necessary emerges.

Miller, who has high ideals for humanity, is not judgmental about small things. He wants everyone to appreciate life, and occasionally he ignores polite regulations in order to set someone straight.

The mundane existence in Dijon is not all that makes life there so hellish; there is also the passion accumulated within himself which had been born in Paris and New York.[9] He cannot reconcile his personality

with that of Dijon. Paris, a relief after other places and times in his life, is not a prison: "Here all boundaries fade away and the world reveals itself for the mad slaughterhouse that it is" (*TCan* 164). The immediacy of Paris is more to his liking and more like his passionate character than Dijon. He glimpses the essence of both cities and is horrified by Dijon. Paris allows him to be free, to live in its streets, and to meet himself. His emotions live in Paris; they flee Dijon.

"Paris is like a whore. From a distance she seems ravishing, you can't wait until you have her in your arms. And five minutes later you feel empty, disgusted with yourself. You feel tricked" (*TCan* 188). The operative word here is "feel." The enticement of the whore does not end with one visit. Attention may be turned to a different woman but sex is not abandoned. Miller may walk different streets, but he does not stop living, feeling, yearning, and experiencing.

Miller is not always alone when he wanders on the streets. He fucks Mona in front of her parents' house, on the sidewalk, in the back of a taxi, and on a bus (also in rooms). The homes with Mona, called "love nests," metaphorically describe sex. The act, rather than four walls, is what they inhabit.

The streets, malleable to the walker's mood, remind him of something outside of himself. At times, streets are the perfect companion. We can obliterate them or seek them out. On man-made city streets real people notice us. "My world of human beings had perished; I was utterly alone in the world and for friends I had the streets, and the streets spoke to me in that sad, bitter language compounded of human misery, yearning, regret, failure, wasted effort" (*TCan* 166).[10]

"The streets were my refuge. And no man can understand the glamour of the streets until he is obliged to take refuge in them, until he has become a straw that is tossed here and there by every zephyr

that blows" (*TCan* 164). Then follows a description of the kaleidoscopic assault of the streets. Miller's innate energy is accosted by what happens, and what *is*, on the street. They become companions, like an impromptu act on a stage with many props.

Life is present-tense on the street, but movement, reminding us of the passage of time, offers perspective. Streets, then, become the site of Miller's emotions. When he visits his parents' house, where time has passed only in the most stultifying way, where life has taken its toll but nothing has changed, it is one of the few times that he cries in a room.

Miller can get along well enough if he does not think about Mona. If he regards her as absent now, or the future without her, he feels the loss as a great void. If he considers the times spent with her in the past, he experiences the wound, the separating gash, all over again. He says that, since suffering is worthless, he must live in the present to be content:

> I couldn't allow myself to think about her very long; if I had I would have jumped off the bridge. It's strange. I had become so reconciled to this life without her, and yet if I thought about her only for a minute it was enough to pierce the bone and marrow of my contentment and shove me back again into the agonizing gutter of my past. (*TCan* 160)

On city streets, Miller often becomes openly emotional. His pent-up emotions explode, sometimes in bursts of tears. As with the time in the womb, now he is surrounded and supported by life, protected from himself and from isolation like that he felt in Dijon.[11] Paradoxically,

the streets also free him from the requirement of communicating or interacting with others or even himself. He is tense even on the streets, and anything can set off an explosion or harangue. Rules are gone on the streets and, with one not knowing anyone, there are no codes to follow. New York is an anonymous city, and in Paris he enjoys another benefit: he lacks the status of a citizen. The linear or radial layout of streets constitutes all we need of rules. The grid (New York) or web (Paris) satisfies our demand for control and limit, and, with no spiritual restraints, unexpurgated emotion is released. Basic necessities are available on city streets, and the immediacy of life there leads to natural responses, like the primordial animal instinct to cry when hurt. The essence of culture and civilization is the city, and the essence of the city, as any map suggests, is the street. We still call somebody "street-wise" when he has, for better or worse, mastered the arts of urban living. But a street is not protection, armor, shelter, or clothing: it is merely transit, and life in this quintessence of culture is virtually as immediate—not mediated through a gold standard of manners and exchange—as life in a state of nature.[12]

If one should cry in a room near another, there is the possibility that someone will hear and offer comfort. But crying as one walks the streets, with disinterested people passing by, can embellish feelings of being unloved. The sole person that notices emphasizes the aloneness, which is true indoors as well. If we need strangers to comfort us we are strangers in the world. (A woman tries to console Miller on the train while he sobs over his daughter, and it only increases his distress.)

Emotions revealed in streets differ from those in rooms, for rooms connote remorse over failure to connect as son or lover, while streets connote freedom as man or lover. Streets matter not only for themselves but also as contrast to architectural or anatomical interiors. The

street is a masculine image as the room is a feminine one. Miller runs away from rooms as he does from his mother and other women.

Descriptions create or suggest a mood. Corrupted fast-paced backgrounds are contrasted with sweet moments as sexual scenes, sometimes set in carefully drawn surroundings, juxtapose motion and emotion. When we observe objects moving at different rates, each speed seems more acute because of the comparison. *Tropic of Cancer* presents the building up of the background, the contrasts, descriptions of streets, which continues in *Sexus* and "Reunion in Brooklyn." The contrast between Paris and Dijon in *Tropic of Cancer* is blatant, but in "Reunion in Brooklyn" contrasts are more intricately woven together.

Streets are boundaries and can break through other boundaries. Miller has an emotional need to break down walls, and emotion and commotion are closely connected for him. If he feels something, he wants to run away. This running is a barrier against communication with others, but an aid in communicating with himself. Mobility—life—realism—dance—movement—fucking—breathing—skating—swimming—rhythm—music. Do not sit down or you will start to think. "Don't sit down . . . keep moving. . . . Keep moving, Henry. Keep your mind on the music" (*TCap* 105). There is a philologic connection between emotion and motion which is clearly exemplified in Miller's writing. Rejected by Mona, Miller escapes beyond the streets of New York to the open road of America's highways. Picked up by an uncommunicative man Miller has time to muse:

> Roads and arteries branching out in every direction. What would the earth be without roads? A trackless ocean. A jungle. The first road through the wilderness must have seemed like a grand

> accomplishment. Direction, orientation, communication. The two roads, three roads . . . then millions of roads. A spider web and in the center of it man, the creator, caught like a fly. (*Sexus* 618)

Roads or words—man is caught in a web of empty communication. At the end of his determined search for peace through separation from love Miller finds an emptiness and a profound loneliness. He is picked up by a talkative man, but the words of their exchange have no value: "Except for the fact that we are talking about material trifles this is the sort of conversation that might be carried on in a French salon. The roads have connected everything up so marvelously that even emptiness can be transported with ease" (*Sexus* 619).

Miller has escaped now, but the energy he has used to pull it off is negative. He has been set loose because of failure, not success. He misses the security of love and of Mona before he can realize the potential security of expression. He is not as secure as he will become, when he can roam the streets alone without running, when they help him communicate. His choice is to willingly relinquish any pride, any independence, any creative liberty so that he may receive even the slightest attention from the one he loves. Henry will become the dog now—as others (particularly his mother and Maude) were made to feel by him when he cared about them but did not approve of them. Returning to the fragile security of the home of Mona and her lover, he trades any ability of expression he has acquired for this warmth. The only communication he uses now is his one word: "Woof!"

Notes

[1] Comments on the two-dimensionality of Miller's characters, especially women, abound. Nin sees them as, possibly, a part of his realism: "The gross caricatures are perhaps more vital, 'more true to life,' than the full portraits of the conventional novel for the reason that the individual today has no centrality and produces not the slightest illusion of wholeness. The characters are integrated to the false, cultural void in which we are drowning . . . " (*TCan* xxx). Frye's discussion of Menippean satire, to which form Miller's work has been compared, reveals more reason for the apparent shallowness of his characters: the form is ". . . not primarily concerned with the exploits of heroes, but relies on the free play of intellectual fancy and the kind of humorous observation that produces caricature" (Frye 309).

[2] Gordon discusses the influences of anarchism upon Miller and believes it is the ". . . principal reason for his disturbing tone. The tradition from which Miller's peculiar spirit of rebellion flows is the European tradition preserved in the ghettos of New York in the nineties, which later infiltrated Brooklyn. In the spirit of Nietzsche and Max Stirner, of Dostoievski reinforced by the polemics of Emma Goldman" (Gordon 33). Miller heard Goldman speak in California in 1913 when he also was given his first book of Nietzsche. "Taking the individual and his personal goals as supreme, Miller was prepared to take himself, Henry Miller, as his only viable hero" (44-5).

[3] Miller's work resembles the *anatomy*, the modern name for the *Menippean satire*, which "At its most concentrated . . . presents us with a vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern. The intellectual structure built up from the story makes for violent dislocations in the customary logic of narrative, though the appearance of carelessness that results reflects only the carelessness of the reader or his tendency to judge by a novel-centered conception of fiction" (Frye 310). This presents one possible method to Miller's chaotic order.

Miller discusses the pattern of his life, as others discuss the pattern of his work: "A goodly part of the narrative has to do with my struggle to express myself in words . . . . And more than anything perhaps, my effort to understand the pattern of my life, its purpose and significance" (*Plexus* frontispiece). "Eventually a day is to dawn when, glancing over my life as though it were a story or history, I can detect in it a form, a pattern, a meaning. From then on the word defeat becomes meaningless. It will be impossible ever to relapse" (*Plexus* 639).

Miller is aware of Freud and Jung and their interest in patterns. He hopes to create art, from the patterns and symbols of his life, which will serve purposes similar to those of analysis. In such therapeutic approaches to

writing and reading, some critics see a psychoanalytic motive. Nelson and Gordon study the Jungian influence, Millett the Freudian. In spite of Miller's sympathy with psychoanalysis, such criticism produces only jejune results, probably because of the banality and predictability that have come to hound nonpsychiatric uses of psychiatry.

[4] Critics of Miller generally refer to Orwell's article, probably because it was one of the first to criticize his work as literature. Cott points out that Miller began this use of the Jonah image while defending Nin's diaries. To Orwell, Miller: "... is neither pushing the world-process forward nor trying to drag it back, but on the other hand he is by no means ignoring it. . . . He is fiddling while Rome is burning, and, unlike the enormous majority of people who do this, fiddling with his face towards the flame" (Mitchell 17).

[5] Kate Millett writes as a defender of feminist ideology, rather than as a literary critic: "... Miller's escalation to open contempt. . . . Miller simply converts woman to 'cunt'—thing, commodity, matter. There is no personality to recognize or encounter. . . " (297). "Miller, in love, reverts to all the sentimental tokens of 'respect' appropriate to a Victorian suitor. Floundering in a sentimentality largely narcissistic, full of sludgy 'idealism' that complements his cynicism, he sends flowers and writes long letters full of regressive daydreams. Rich in pathos as it is, Miller's long, frustrating attachment to Mara is less a love story, than the case history of a neurotic dependence" (311).

Mailer's comments on Miller's attitudes to women also seem to reflect more on the writer of the criticism than on its subject: "... still he screams his barbaric yawp of utter adoration for the power and the glory and the grandeur of the female in the universe, and it is his genius to show that this power is ready to survive any context or any abuse" (*Genius and Lust* 94).

Cott questions Miller about the challengers of his representation of women: "Henry . . . Anaïs Nin wrote in her diaries that in *Tropic of Cancer* you created a book in which you have a sex and a stomach. In *Tropic of Capricorn* and *Black Spring* she says, you have eyes, ears, and a mouth. And eventually . . . you will finally create a full man, at which point you'll be able to write about a woman for real." (Miller answers) "... but I want so badly to write a letter to the women who are against me. . . . and I'd like to say: 'My dear Germaine Greer, isn't it obvious from my work that I love women?' " (Cott 157).

[6] "From the viewpoint of content, all his works could be considered as one prodigious textbook on how not to suffer.

Take a look at the necropolis about you. Re-savor the bitter bones you were handed to gnaw on by Western civilization. Were they not all an education in *how to suffer*? From Baudelaire to Thomas Mann? Joyce, Proust, Yeats, Eliot, et al.?" (Gilbert Neiman in *Happy Rock* 94-95).

[7] "I really do believe that we men are like little dogs that only want to be petted, stroked, and reassured. Women are our masters and we are simply cat's paws—they can do anything with us they want!" (*Reflections* 93).

[8] Shapiro notices this element: "Here is an artist who re-establishes the potency of illusion by gaping at the open wounds, by courting the stern, psychological reality which man seeks to avoid through recourse to the oblique symbolism of art. Here the symbols are laid bare, presented almost as naively and unblushingly by this overcivilized individual as by the well-rooted savage. It is no false primitivism which gives rise to this savage lyricism. It is not a retrogressive tendency, but a swing forward into unbeaten areas" (*TCan* xxx).

[9] Michael Fraenkel writes: ". . . the man with deep urgent emotions, deep urgent loves and hates, who saw and felt and understood from the blood, with the heart and sympathetic nerves, who had known life first-hand and knew what a terrible and lovely thing it was, a knife that cut both ways" (*Happy Rock* 45-6).

[10] Mailer connects Miller's language to his life on the streets: "His wisdom breathes in the sap of filthy speech because, as he remarks himself, his deepest and truest education was on the streets" (Mailer 402). Shapiro notes this influence also: "Not the greatest prose probably, but Miller is not a writer; Henry James is a writer. Miller is a talker, a street corner gabbler, a prophet, and a Patagonian" (*TCan* vii). Miller himself writes: "What is not in the open street is false, derived, that is to say, *literature* (epigraph "The Fourteenth Ward," *Black Spring*).

[11] "When you have suffered a great deal in a certain place you have the impression that the record is imprinted in the street. But if you notice, streets seem peculiarly unaffected by the sufferings of private individuals. If you step out of a house at night, after losing a dear friend, the street seems really quite discreet. If the outside became like the inside it would be unbearable. Streets are breathing places . . . " (*Sexus* 625).

[12] Miller describes lower Manhattan: "Only in the beehive can one find the human touch, find that city of sights, sounds, smells which one hunts for in vain beyond the margins of the ghetto. To live outside the pale is to wither and die. . . . in the seething honey-comb there is a growth as of plants, an animal warmth almost suffocating, a vitality which accrues from rubbing and glueing together, a hope which is physical as well as spiritual, a contamination which is dangerous but salutary. Small souls perhaps, burning like tapers, but burning steadily—and capable of throwing portentious shadows on the walls which hem them in" (*Sexus* 535-36).

Images of Acceptance and Communication of Love

A feeling of suffocation pervades Miller's writing, and yet, his excessive energy bursts through as general chaos or individual sparks.[1] Endlessly talking, speaking his mind, voicing his opinions, he fights a surface repression, and yet, the core of his feelings most often remains hidden. Intimate feelings revealed create memorable scenes because of their relative rarity and quietude. These scenes are singular gestures, difficult to name; something like "apocalypse," "romantic epiphany," or, from film, "suspended animation." Like the *tableaux vivants* of the theater they are poised emotion, frozen motion between dramatic words and defined lighting.[2]

The ability to reveal the depths of the soul is unusual and often hidden. A book of the ideas of the heart would be dense, too emotional to be endured. Scattered through a work they are realistic and poetic images within a tale. Miller, in "Reunion in Brooklyn," says that "The real drama of man on earth is concerned with Reality" (104). In recreating reality he has borrowed from the dramatic tradition. These scenes are reminiscent of the tropism of the *nouveau roman* in which moments of life are captured in an illuminated stillness and serenity.

The following scene shows Mona and Henry when their affair begins:

> We are on the beach and the moon is scudding through the clouds. But before that we are sitting close together in the motorman's box in the elevated train. I had been telling her the story of Tony and Joey. I had just written it—perhaps because of her, because of the effect of certain vaguenesses. She had thrown me back suddenly on myself, made loneliness seem delectable. She had stirred those grape-like bunches of emotion which were strung like a garland on the skeleton of my ego. She had revived the boy, the boy who ran through the fields to greet his little friends. There was never any actor then! That boy ran alone. That boy ran to throw himself into the arms of Joey and Tony. . . . Why did she look at me so intently when I told her the story of Joey and Tony? There was a terrible brightness in her face, that I can never forget. Now I think I know what it was. I think I had stopped her—stopped that incessant spinning and weaving. There was gratitude in her eyes, as well as love and admiration. I had stopped the machine and she had risen like a vapor, for just a few minutes. That terribly bright look was the nimbus of her liberated self. (*Sexus* 329-30)

Like the wish to stop the machine of modern society that Miller expresses in *Tropic of Cancer,* he has had an effect upon Mona—he has changed the course of her existence. The importance of a gesture—of

putting a hand on the cog of a wheel, whether the mechanical wheel of an industrial society or the homely spinning wheel of his lover's life—emerges clearly in this tableau.[3]

Mona's love combined with the freedom of the streets liberates Miller; he is able to write. Happy and free now, as he was in the scene from his childhood, he displays his characteristic immediacy in scenes which describe the most natural and simple occurrences in man's life. These moments are the truth and must be encircled by light to be revealed among the din of the mechanical movements of everyday. Miller reveres the life that courses through children picking flowers and adults fondling each other.

A picnic with Maude and their daughter is another pastoral scene in which life and "nature" are abundant. The picture is of the family away, its separation from surrounding life, more mechanical and perhaps more pronounced for the train ride they must take to the site of the picnic:

> . . . the day of the outing. Lying in the grass somewhere in Mineola. The child running about gathering flowers. It was warm, very warm, and there was a hot dry wind blowing which made one nervous and rooty. I had taken my prick out and put it in her hand. (*Sexus* 465)

Tableaux occur in the painterly tradition where their first appearances involved divine epiphany. Here Miller obviously resembles other modern writers concerned with crystallizing life into an "epiphany" (Joyce), an "image" (Pound and Yeats), an "icon" (W. K. Wimsatt), or some other focal "objective correlative" borrowed from the concepts of philosophy, religion, or the visual arts. Miller was an accomplished watercolorist,

and visual expression is as important to his healing as his own writing. In a gallery:

> . . . surrounded by the men and women of Matisse . . . I am drawn back again to the proper precincts of the human world. On the threshold of that big hall whose walls are now ablaze, I pause a moment to recover from the shock which one experiences when the habitual gray of the world is rent asunder and the color of life splashes forth in song and poem. I find myself in a world so natural, so complete that I am lost. I have the sensation of being immersed in the very plexus of life, focal from whatever place, position or attitude I take my stance. (*TCan* 146)

Matisse's zeal transports Miller towards emotion, banishes his numbness, removes him from the void, and jerks him from his contented and passive state within the movement of life. The passion that is always within Miller surfaces. The paintings embody a passion about something beyond himself or perhaps deeper within himself than his pain. As his own feelings return they flow towards Matisse's experiences, and are not left to chance encounters with Miller's own sufferings. The sensitivity of man must be great for him to be an artist, and thus help other men regain their passion through his own.

The tableaux are painterly and theatrical in their illumination, poise, and grandeur. The following is the illuminated encapsulation of the love of Henry and Mona; blessed by heaven (imagery of the Bible)

and sanctioned by society (occurs in a public place). Henry is at Maude's when Mona poisons herself. At Mona's side, he listens for her breathing, and then: "I began to review the evolution of this love. *Evolution?* There had been no evolution. It had been instantaneous" (*Sexus* 327).

> In vain I ransacked my brain. However, I was able to recall this much. On a certain day in Spring I met her in the Rose Room of a large hotel. She had arranged to meet me there in order to show me a dress she had bought. I had come ahead of time and after a few restless moments I had fallen into a trance. It was her voice which brought me to. She had spoken my name and the voice had passed through me, like smoke through gauze. She was ravishing, appearing suddenly like that before my eyes. I was still coming out of the mist. As she sat down I rose slowly, still moving through a fog, and knelt at her feet, mumbling something about the radiance of her beauty. For a full few minutes she made no effort to rouse me. She held my two hands in hers and smiled down at me, that effulgent, luminous smile which spreads like a halo and then vanishes, never to appear again. It was the seraphic smile of peace and benediction. It was given in a public place wherein we found ourselves alone. It was a sacrament, and the hour, the day, the place were recorded in letters of gold in the book of legend which

> lay at the foot of the Tree of Life. Thenceforth we who had united were joined by an invisible being. Never again would come that hush, that finality—until death perhaps. Something had been given, something received. For a few *timeless moments* we had stood at the gates of paradise—then we were driven forth and that starry effulgence was shattered. Like the tongues of lightening it vanished in a thousand different directions. (*Sexus* 332-33 emphasis added)

Mouths unite in a kiss and then comes knowledge and speech followed by the fall to earth and the loss of heaven. Chaos appears again—the two come together and break apart to form other worlds and other attachments, but none so complete as this one from which all others spring (like Adam and Eve and the creation of the world). Here is an excellent example of a tableau of emotion in a busy place, of a peace more powerful than chaos. As in the heaven in which Miller dreams he meets his mother, he and a woman are alone in a populated place. Love and peace have superseded the general confusion of the world.

Actors on a stage exist in their own world and yet are viewed by many. Miller stops everything to describe a *shared* emotion between two people within a city seething with passion and suffering, not touching the actors but supporting the wonder with reality. The tableau shines brighter and seems more luxurious for the comparison.

Chapter Twenty is the shortest chapter of *Sexus*, but it is entirely about Mona. Miller does not visit Mona as the old Jewish man suggests, but he recounts his reprehensible behavior shamelessly. Because of existing barriers, he avoids the mourning scene by going roller-skating; with the

escape, new barriers are constructed. Mona and love, inextricable, break down the barricades:

> . . . as she gathered me up in the folds of the tribe . . . . Yes, I felt the power and the pride of her people. . . . it said . . . . I am taking you out of this world. I am going to enthrone you.
>
> And this was Mona, the Mona who had come to me from the center of the dance floor and offered herself, as she had offered herself to hundreds and perhaps thousands of others before me. Such a strange, wondrous flower is the human being. You hold it in your hand and while you sleep it grows, it becomes transformed, it exhales a narcotic fragrance.
>
> In a few seconds I had become worshipful. It was almost unbearable to look at her steadily. To think that she would follow me home, accept the life I had to offer her, seems unbelievable. I had asked for a woman and I had been given a queen. (*Sexus* 541-43)

Love and passion produce communication amidst choreographed movement and a clarity among chaos. The couple has the spotlight and the city forms the backdrop. Love, sex, vision, and city streets are "avenues" of community and communion. These are the recurrent elements discussed in the present volume and they are represented in the following passage:

> I remember her face, her new soulful look, the

brilliance and magnetism of the eyes, the translucent tone of the flesh.

I remember that we walked for a time through deserted streets. And perhaps, listening only to the sound of her voice, perhaps then she told me everything, all that I had ever longed to know about her. I remember not a word of it. Nothing had any importance or meaning except the future. I held her hand, clasped it firmly, the fingers entwined, walking with her into the overabundant future. Nothing could possibly be what it had been before. The ground had opened up, the past had been swept away, drowned, drowned as deep as a lost continent. And miraculously—how miraculously I only realized as the moments prolonged themselves!—she had been saved, had been restored to me. It was my duty, my mission, my destiny in this life to cherish and protect her. As I thought of all that lay ahead I began to grow from within, as if from a small seed. I grew inches in the space of a block. It was in my heart that I felt the seed bursting.

And then, as we stood at the corner, a bus came along. We jumped in and went upstairs on the deck. To the very front seat. As soon as the fare had been paid I took her in my arms and smothered her with kisses. We were alone and the bus was careening over the bumpy pavement. (*Sexus* 542)

Miller is intrinsically involved in the action and movement of life. He wanders and he sees so much wherever he goes that his world seems constantly full, and yet there are moments when all else is quiet and his senses stop taking in all and capture, instead, the small gesture, the hidden feeling, the buried thought, the intended idea. These ignite him as do philosophy, religion, and art. Anything he cares about can touch his spirit, and he seems to care about everything as he cares about nothing. These special, quiet moments reveal a deepness of soul and a tenderness of heart that many deny exists in themselves and in Miller.

Miller understands his feelings in these quietly astonishing scenes. Emotions mount until a smile or tears become their release and their embodiment. In so doing, they are expressed beyond words and communicated to the other characters and to the reader. Miller, always the actor, enlarges simple looks so that they are noticeable among the bustle. These tableaux of sentiment differ from the tableaux of sex. With the contrast between motion and stasis emphasized so that its importance is felt, these scenes are love *in* action and *as* action.

In the trilogies and "Reunion in Brooklyn" these moments occur as they would for a city-dweller—in streets crowded and anonymous, deserted yet full—or else in rooms furnished as streets are laid out, occupants shifting. Setting these special moments among the movement and anonymity of a mass of people heightens their effectiveness, as a delicate flower placed in a floral arrangement in a smoky, crowded room may seem more gentle, more meaningful, and closer to the wonder of nature than the same flower growing in a sunlit meadow.

In these scenes, Miller goes beyond the recording of intellectual and verbal interaction and beyond the expression of emotional pain and tension; he allows souls to touch. Such sensitivity engenders another kind of dialogue between people—exchange of sex and of ideas which

is an exchange of emotion, feeling, understanding, tenderness.

Tableaux embody Miller's sensitivity, and convey it as well as his prepared speeches. We ought to observe some distinction between the sensitivity of Miller the character and that of Miller the author. The actions of the character should be compared with what else the author chooses to include (as in the scene with Maude and the child on the picnic). To be sensitive in a literary sense is, perhaps, a completely different thing from sensitivity to people.

So much of Miller's work is about closeness of bodies; his tableaux are about closeness of souls. Perhaps these latter scenes are what he yearns for, but cannot always create, as he creates the sex scenes. The relative scarcity of tableaux in his work does not indicate a deficiency in the character or author, but mirrors the reality of both Miller the character and Miller the author.

With Maude after the picnic, for example, he says he feels as if they are getting to know each other all over again. Relaxed and open to each other, they are willing to be vulnerable. For this special deeper understanding, boundaries must be gone, as they should be during sex. Despite all his talk of being free, he is restrained. Those who talk the most, act—but do not necessarily feel—the least. The adage applies to his inability to share his sensitivity. He begins life with strict but doting parents; then graduates to Maude, equally strict; then Mona, who seems sexually free but is warped, in that she lives lies.

Two or more people relaxed in a shared place, time, and action are highly aware of their own sensations. Occasional moments of revelation also occur, not with another person, but when Miller is alone with his thoughts, as he is at the end of *Tropic of Cancer* along the banks of the Seine. Often the tableaux do not involve people whom Miller knows well. The element which causes attraction exists and the author pays

tribute to it by recording its manifestations. Collins is a casual acquaintance who has a significant effect on Miller:

> In the feeble state that I was in, the yarn that he spun had an extraordinary soothing effect upon me. It took me completely out of myself. He had guts, this guy. . . . As he reached for his drink his face grew more and more soft and his words actually seemed to caress me. And all the while China hanging over us like Fate itself. . . .
>
> I could no longer follow his story; my mind had slipped back to a Fourth of July when I bought my first package of firecrackers . . . . (*TCan* 178-79)

The tableaux stand out as examples of Miller's sensitivity, both as writer and as man. His escapism comes from the despair of a sensitive man, who is happier when he can be communicative and sympathetic. His "optimism" is false in a way, manufactured, but he believes it himself sometimes. His optimism originates from energy, his calm from a certain kind of hopelessness, and his perception from sensitivity.

The tableaux, moments of attachment so deep that they are liberating, dramatize a conflict within Miller, a desire to understand and sympathize, and yet, a desire for noninvolvement. Is it possible to be free *with* someone? Is Miller free with Mona? When he gives and takes indiscriminately, is he trying to interact but stay free? Finally, can Miller explain his own sentiments? When his soul is touched he uses images like a poet or painter. With the abundance of words describing his likes, his dislikes, and his hopes for change, there seems always to be a ring

of quiet around what he appreciates and loves, yearns for but cannot control:

> . . . the deeper law of love, which is based on absolute tolerance, the law which suffers or permits things to be as they are. Real love is never perplexed, never qualifies, never rejects, never demands. It replenishes, by grace of restoring unlimited circulation. It burns, because it knows the true meaning of sacrifice. It is life illumined. (*Wisdom of the Heart* 45)[4]

Love is life laid bare, opened to understanding, making a ring of acceptance in a world of competition. The tableaux that reflect the deep love within Miller resemble a stage surrounded by a circle of lights, where all is revealed in a ring of calm, purpose, and energy among the general hubbub of life. These are Miller's images of love. A momentary divorce from the chaos of everyday, to lapse from involvement in petty worries and indulge in the more deeply satisfying elements of life. A place and a time to stop being the buffoon, the clown, the enrollé in life, a force, an optimistic energy, the intellectual; to stop being something and *be:* "Real awareness comes intermittently, in brief flashes of a second's duration. The man who can hold it for a minute, relatively speaking, inevitably changes the whole trend of the world" ("Reunion in Brooklyn" 104).[5]

In the following tableau Miller connects with Mona as he watches her lying in a drugged sleep. In an obscure way this digression discusses the relationship of Mona and Henry to each other and to themselves. The clearest message here seems to be that acceptance of self simplifies life

and makes it a braver and grander venture; this in turn enables acceptance of others. It is difficult to determine which described personality Miller means to fit himself and which to fit Mona.

> There are moments when the elixir of life rises to such over-brimming splendor that the soul spills over. In the seraphic smile of the Madonnas the soul is seen to flood the psyche. The moon of the face becomes full; the equation is perfect. A minute, a half-minute, *a second later*, the miracle has passed. Something intangible, something inexplicable, was given out—and received. In the life of a human being it may happen that the moon never comes to the full. . . . Rarer still are the anomalous ones who having come to the full, are so terrified by the wonder of it that they spend the rest of their lives endeavoring to stifle that which gave them birth and being. . . . Blasted by their own radiance they live forever the futile quest of beauty, truth and harmony. Depossessed of their own effulgence they seek to possess the soul and spirit of those to whom they are attracted. Especially dangerous are they to the radiant ones; it is always towards these bright and inexhaustible luminaries that they are most passionately drawn.
>
> . . .
>
> She lay in an argent light, the lips slightly parted in a mysterious smile. Her body seemed extraordinarily light, as if floating in the distilled

> vapors of a drug. The glow which always emanated from her flesh was still there, but it was detached, suspended all about her, hovering over her like some rare condensation waiting to be reabsorbed by the flesh. (*Sexus* 334-35)

Surrender and acceptance, the easiest and most difficult things to do, are the essential elements of the love that Miller talks of and sets off so sublimely:

> To relax . . . . is the first thing any one has to learn in order to live. It is extremely difficult, because it means surrender, full surrender. Howe's whole point of view is based on this simple, yet revolutionary idea of full and unequivocal surrender. (*WofH* 32)

The Wisdom of the Heart discusses E. Graham Howe's psychological philosophy of acceptance. Influenced by Eastern thought, it is a road to a peaceful existence: ". . . man has got to learn the doctrine of acceptance, that is, of unconditional surrender, which is love" (*WofH* 34).[6] With this philosophy Miller can experience the fullness of life he has always wanted to and relinquish the need to resist those who disagree with him: "'It is as if we change the map of life itself by changing our attitude towards it,' says Howe" (*WofH* 33). He abides by this doctrine in some form at the end of *Sexus*, with the emphatic but unconditional "Woof!", with negative consequences. The best example

of this doctrine at work in Miller's book-life is "Reunion in Brooklyn," in which he begins to accept his family, reaching beyond his grievances against his mother to respect and help his father. This maturity, moreover, continues in the dream-piece, "Mother," in which he finally accepts his mother.

In *Sexus,* Miller is trying to run far enough away from his problems to gain perspective. The need to write helps him objectify and analyze his situation and himself; the thought and subsequent revelations lead to the ability to write.[7]

Orwell writes about *Tropic of Cancer,* "The thing has become so unusual as to seem almost anomalous, but it is the book of a man who is happy" (Mitchell 12). It may be significant that Orwell was among the first to grasp Miller's meaning, since Orwell was such a different type of writer. Whereas Miller, born Miller, enviably wrote only about Miller, "Orwell" was a creature, a pseudonym adopted by one Eric Blair who seldom wrote about Eric Blair. This "leap into fiction," even before the fiction itself was written, may have predisposed Orwell to sympathize intensely with one who refused to make the leap. Orwell more or less disguised himself to experience life in a style of being "down and out in Paris and London," but Miller, who had been literally down and out in Paris, had no need for disguise, masquerade, camouflage, or pseudonym.

Finally, in *Tropic of Cancer,* Miller can sound like his own creation—the Happy Man.[8] The Happy Man who puts his hand in the machine and stops the ordinary progression of so many lives around him by celebrating his own life. He is able, unlike the madonnas of the tableau, to let go of the security of mundane existence which others, to the belittlement of their existence, hang on to with their emotional sobriety. He stands in his own circle of light to which others flock to dance and celebrate life.

The Happy Man described in *Sexus* has been married for a year. When Miller marries Mona his emotions are too disorganized to be expressed, and he must react to outsiders and outside events in order to show his excitement. The Happy Man, like an actor, is close enough to his feelings to express them:

> I had reached a state of indifference born of despair. I let myself drift with the current.
>
> . . . the place was cosily filled, everybody was in a good mood. Suddenly, at a table nearby, a young man rose to his feet with a glass in hand and addressed the house. He wasn't drunk, he was just in a pleasant state of euphoria . . . the first anniversary of their wedding, and because they felt so good about it that they wanted everybody to know it and to share their happiness. . . . he was happy because he had found the woman he loved, and he still loved her just as much as ever, though they were now married a whole year. (He smiled.) . . . He said he thought it wonderful that there could be such happiness when there were so many things wrong with the world, but that perhaps there would be more happiness if people confessed their happiness to one another instead of waiting to confide in one another when they were sorrowful and sad.
>
> . . . He was utterly sincere, utterly genuine and utterly possessed by the realization that to be happy is the greatest boon on earth. . . . Suddenly

now and then some one comes awake, comes undone, as it were, from the meaningless glue in which we are stuck . . . .

. . . Happiness is as legitimate as sorrow, and everybody, except those emancipated souls who in their wisdom have found something better, or bigger, desires to be happy and would, if he could (if he only knew how!), sacrifice everything to attain it.

I liked the young man's speech, inane as it might appear on close scrutiny. Everybody liked it. Everybody liked him and his wife. Everybody felt better, more communicative, more relaxed, more liberated. It was as if he had given us all a shot in the arm. . . . Soon the drinks began to flow and they were singing, and then they began to dance, and they danced differently than they would have before . . . . It was astonishing what an effect a simple, open declaration of joy could bring about.

I felt sorry for him [MacGregor] if what he said were true. Nobody can feel better than the man who is completely taken in. To be intelligent may be a boon, but to be completely trusting, gullible to the point of idiocy, to surrender without reservation, is one of the supreme joys of life. (*Sexus* 159-65)

In a dance, as in a tableau, the central figures are separated from

the crowd and encircled by light. As Henry matures and becomes comfortable with his life, he learns to join in the dance:

> By acceptance of *all* the aspects of life, good and bad, right and wrong, yours and mine, the static, defensive life, which is what most people are cursed with, is converted into a dance, 'the dance of life,' as Havelock Ellis called it. The real function of the dance is—*metamorphosis.* (*WofH* 32)[9]

He develops an appreciation of living. In "Reunion in Brooklyn," his maturity becomes especially apparent as the empathy of a man who has suffered and learned to accept human existence with all its pain and powerful joy.

With "Reunion in Brooklyn" Miller begins to negotiate situations he once ran from or built blockades against. He overcomes his reluctance to go home, takes in the situation there, weeps when it hurts, interacts with his father, listens and tries to help; he is no longer like the infant in the womb or the observer in the whale—he has matured into an actively caring individual. Miller not only hears the music of life, but feels its beat, and while learning the rhythm becomes a participant. No one can accuse him, in "Reunion in Brooklyn," of watching the dance—he grabs his father, at least, by the arm. In *Tropic of Cancer* he writes, "To confess, to whine, to complain, to commiserate, always demands a toll. To sing it doesn't cost a penny." Has he learned that to pay a toll is the prerequisite to having something worthwhile?

Miller begins his trip home with a desire to communicate with his family and a fear of not meeting expectations: "What plagued me all the time I was away, and with renewed force as I was crossing the

ocean, was the realization that I could give them no help" (*RiB* 64) and "They very naturally expected me to telephone them immediately on my arrival. It was cruel not to do so but I was so intent on easing my own pain that I postponed communicating with them for a week or more" (*RiB* 65).

He begins his visit with a sense of guilt:

> As I approached the gate I saw my father sitting in the armchair by the window. The sight of him sitting there, waiting for me, gave me a terrible pang. It was as though he had been sitting there waiting all these years. I felt at once like a criminal, like a murderer. (*RiB* 66-7)

The story is full of imagery of barriers—breaking through them, walking over them: "It was my sister who opened the iron gate. . . . My mother and father were standing at the threshold to greet me. . . . I was bursting to make some sacrifice for them . . ." (*RiB* 67). Here he is bursting, as he had been when he needed to write, but is now confident and more mature. He uses his energy to give of himself and to communicate rather than for flight. First, tense energy is released in tears, and then he is able to listen and comfort.

> We embraced one another and then we stood apart in silence for another fleeting moment during which I comprehended in a flash the appalling tragedy of their life and of my own life and of every animate creature's on earth. In that moment all the strength which I had accumulated

> to fortify myself was undone; I was emptied of everything but an overwhelming compassion. When suddenly my mother said, "Well, Henry, how do we look to you?" I let out a groan followed by the most heart-rending sobs. I wept as I had never wept before. (*RiB* 67)

Immediacy of emotion is expressed viscerally with tears, sex, and food. The family eats: "We pass easily from sorrow to gluttony." His family wants to share with him now. Have they always been this ready? Has his weeping released them all? Do they simply need a new audience? Miller, the inveterate talker, is ready to listen. He has opened up a new relationship and he has begun to recognize and accept his own feelings and to appreciate those of the others.

There is a deep comprehension of his father's plight:

> His whole attention, since the advent of the bag, was concentrated on the quality and flow of his urine. "People say hello, how are you getting on and then biffo! they forget about you". . . . It was a random remark, apropos of nothing as far as I can remember, but what he meant evidently was that others *could* forget whereas he couldn't. (*RiB* 77)

Miller creates an understanding of his father by allowing himself to be touched and to respond. Mona's suicide attempts upset Miller, he considers himself, and finally his love, but does not run to her. While he is appreciative of any honest emotional communication he can have with

Mona, he cannot work at it, as he can now with his father.

When Henry gives his father some money, the father thanks him and warns him not to tell the mother and sister. This makes the son feel "wretched and exasperated." He learns that his father has been stretching the time between visits to the doctor and he sees the situation in a flash, if not a wholly objective one: "I was so choked with rage and mortification I could scarcely answer him. It seemed to me that he was being slowly tortured and humiliated; they behaved as if he had committed a crime by becoming ill" (*RiB* 85). Miller is struggling again, hurt by what is happening but unable to communicate or to act appropriately. In the past he acted instinctively upon his emotions, but now, closer to his feelings, he can act responsibly in emotional situations.

Less eager now to speak his mind than to create peace and happiness, his rebelliousness is squelched: "I squirmed in my seat and tried to assume an air of genuine interest" (*RiB* 75). This is a sign of maturity. No longer twisting and turning within his desire to write, he has achieved what he yearned for—he has been abroad and he has written a book. The passionate feelings between family members of "Reunion in Brooklyn" remind one of a scene with his young daughter in which she runs from him in the street. There he is uncertain whether she is ashamed or afraid of him and here he is amazed and ashamed of his parents. These are natural feelings between family members. Once again Miller's dramatization is realistic. The speck of thread his mother removes from his coat annoys him, whereas kind words from an acquaintance he had offended in the past—"I want to help you!"—touch him.[10] He behaves more openly and leniently with this man than with his mother whom he seems to understand, however unwillingly. His belief in the philosophy of acceptance is tested by his mother, whose coldness repels him.

This first visit, on his return from Europe, provides a foundation

for familial understanding but does not, by any means, dissolve the discomforts and dislikes: "As I say, there was a blend of stupidity, criminality and hypocrisy in the atmosphere. By the time I was ready to take leave my throat was sore from repressing my emotions" (*RiB* 86). Acceptance has begun, but not blossomed. He still must do some running:

> I embraced them in turn rapidly and fled out of the house. In the street I allowed the tears to flow freely. I sobbed and wept unrestrainedly all the way to the elevated station. As I entered the train, as we passed the names of familiar stations, all of them recalling some old wound or humiliation, I began enacting in my mind the scene I had just been through, began describing it as if I were seated before the typewriter with a fresh piece of paper in the roller. (*RiB* 86)

He uses the city and his writing to help him through this wrenching experience. Reminiscent of scenes from *The Rosy Crucifixion*, it is like a step backward in his development, making the chronicle of his maturation true-to-life. There is growth, not a miraculous transformation —Henry remains himself. He has faced what he has protected himself from for years, he has begun to admit that he can love what he does not like, and shows this honesty within himself in his reaction to this visit.

Miller's father is willing to show affection and in "Reunion in Brooklyn" the bond between father and son is acknowledged: "Like myself he had no compunctions about asking for help when he needed it. He took it for granted that people should help, because he himself

was always the first to help when any one was in need" (*RiB* 92). Miller's mother does not give or accept affection easily and when she does it is in a form hardly recognizable as such, and often unpleasant. Her habitual response when offered a gift is "'You oughtn't to have done it!' . . . a remark that always drove me crazy" (*RiB* 91).

In "Mother," mother and son finally communicate; Miller as writer is creating excuses for his mother so that he can love her. Their communion, which Henry felt impossible in life, occurs in his writing after her death. The preface of the piece is direct: "This text was inspired by a dream in which I died and found myself in *Devachan* (limbo) where I ran into my mother whom I hated all my life" ("Mother" 172).[11] Now he is ready to love even his mother: "I was alive still, but in a new sense. I had a different intelligence, a whole new set of emotions. Above all, I was at peace—in a state of bliss, rather" ("Mother" 172).

The mother begins to speak of things which her son would wonder about. She espouses the benefit of the life of immediacy as she describes *Devachan*: "Here one acquires wisdom, not learning. We live according to our instincts and our intuitions. Like that we remain part animal, part human" ("Mother" 177). Miller comforts himself with the voice of his mother, an answer to all the misery she caused him. She comforts him with the motherly advice he missed all his life and offers ideas with which to deal with future pain:

> . . . "Sometimes one runs out of compassion. The world below was so full of misery that if one felt sorry for everyone who was in distress one could shed rivers of tears. When I return to earth this time I am sure I shall have more courage and strength than before."

> Having endured much suffering, misery, humiliation, I could appreciate her words. ("Mother" 180)

On some matters, even here in a dream, Miller and his mother disagree. Is he trying to believe that she has been right and that it is her view which he should follow in order to love her and become a happier man? " 'You're dead right, son. This is the dream world, the true reality. Down below all is illusion. Only the imagination is real' " ("Mother" 176).

The trilogies were written to relieve suffering and to help heal the wound caused by the loss of Mona. This wound, like that caused by his first love, symbolizes mortality. The first wound, that caused by the separation of mother and child at birth, heals when the child becomes an adult and rebellion turns to understanding. This reconciliation is an important step towards maturity and health.

Miller the author uses his imagined mother to defend the interpersonal communication which his actual mother was incapable of sharing:

> "Since I am here I've discovered that books aren't as important as we believe on earth. We have no newspapers, magazines or books. I would say that in talking to one another we are reading and writing books. And we don't get headaches and colitis from it either. Every day we gain a broader outlook on life, become more tolerant and more at peace with ourselves and one another." ("Mother" 181)[12]

Miller demotes literature from its lofty position so that his mother and her new cause may take its place. After this reorganization, he can

lower his defenses. Miller, having begun the reconciliation between mother and son with this tale, imagines her as speaking with him, and then he is ready to change his attitude in order to claim his love: "The crime of hating my mother while alive now seemed to me enormously significant. . . . The whole business of literature seemed a completely futile one" ("Mother" 184).

The entire dream-piece is lit by the lights of a heaven, and the concluding tableau comes closer to the divine than the scenes with Mona. The bond between mother and son is holy by tradition (Mary and Jesus)—it does not represent the merging of sexes or races but of two who began as one—as primary as the bond between God and his creation—man. Miller, with new power and understanding gained from his experience and lessons of love, can reach beyond emotional and intellectual confusion or disappointment to make a proclamation of love:

> With that I stood up, my eyes wet with tears, and giving a mighty shout, I cried: "Mother, I love you. *I love you!* Do you hear me?" I imagined [and his mother has just said that "Only the imagination is real" (176)] that I saw a faint smile illumine her face and then suddenly she was no more. ("Mother" 184-85)

A communication of love and understanding with his mother had become a vital step towards peace and this imagined scene is all the reality he needed.[13]

Miller's happiness in *Tropic of Cancer* may seem superficial, only a relative peace after the hell of New York. This is preliminary to the positive, active happiness and peace he will find in Greece and record

in *The Colossus of Maroussi*. In the story of Miller's life all steps fit into the progression of calm, acceptance, and understanding he achieves in the life revealed in his books. The embracing of his family, in "Reunion in Brooklyn" and "Mother," and of Howe's philosophy of acceptance are two vital steps in the genesis of Miller the wise old man.

[1] Miller has a life inside of him; he is pregnant with words and, like a woman pregnant with child, he is excruciatingly sensitive: "Boris is rubbing his hands again. Mr. Wren is still stuttering and spluttering. I have a bottle between my legs and I'm shoving the corkscrew in. Mrs. Wren has her mouth parted expectantly. The wine is splashing between my legs, the sun is splashing through the bay-window, and inside my veins there is a bubble and splash of a thousand crazy things that commence to gush out of me now pell-mell. I'm telling them everything that comes to mind, everything that was bottled up inside me and which Mrs. Wren's loose laugh has somehow released" (*TCan* 13).

[2] The entry for *tableau* in Holman's *Handbook* is: "An interlude during a scene of a play in which the actors freeze in position and then resume action as before or hold their positions until the curtain falls. . . . For the costumed representation of well-known scenes, pictures, or personages, the term *tableau vivant* (living picture) was used. Such tableaux are often presented in pageants or floats" (Holman). Notice that these scenes, like those of Miller, happen in public places.

[3] Dick writes: "Miller swallowed a dictionary but his feelings come from deep down, and together the words shoot out of his fingertips like liquid fire in just the right sequence to make his books a natural phenomena (sic). . . . Said Perles of *Tropic of Cancer*: 'The three dimensional plasticity of the language is almost frightening at times' " (Dick 48).

[4] All subsequent references to *The Wisdom of the Heart* will be indicated by the abbreviation *WofH*.

[5] All subsequent references to "Reunion in Brooklyn" will be indicated by the abbreviation *RiB* and are cited as they appear in the collection *Sunday After the War*.

[6] Dick notes a step towards acceptance which Miller takes in Greece: "He never knew the meaning of peace until he arrived at Epidaurus. 'Over thirty years I had wandered, as if in a labyrinth. I had tasted every joy, every despair, but I had never known the meaning of peace. En route I had vanquished all my enemies one by one, but the greatest enemy of all I had not recognized—myself' " (Dick 74).

[7] " 'The coward in me always concealed himself in that thick armor of dull passivity. I only grew truly sensitive again when I had attained a certain measure of liberation . . . . To live out one's desires and, in so doing, subtly alter their nature is the aim of every individual who aspires to evolve.'

The idea of self-liberation—what psychologists today like to call 'self-actualization' or 'individuation'—has always been Miller's great concern in all of his books, which progress from the *via purgativa* to the *via unitiva*" (Cott 156).

[8] In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne Booth suggests that modern readers are so steeped in ironies that they may see complexity where there is none. He refers to Edmund Wilson who after reading *Tropics* ". . . praised Miller for his skillful ironic portrait of a particular kind of 'vaporing' poseur, for making his hero really live, 'and not merely in his vaporings or poses. He gives us the genuine American bum come to lead the beautiful life in Paris; and he lays him away forever in his dope of Pernod and dreams.' To all of this praise for irony, Miller replies, 'The theme is myself, and the narrator, or the hero, as your critic puts it is also myself. . . . If he means the narrator, then it is me . . . I don't use "heroes," incidentally, nor do I write novels. I am the hero, and the book is myself' "(Booth 367). It is the Word and the Word is God.

[9] In "Patchen: Man of Anger and Light," Miller voices a similar, if somewhat more cynical, opinion: "I am vitally interested in the man who today has the misfortune of being an artist and a human being. . . . He must create, by the sacrifice of his own being, the awareness of a value and a dignity which the word *human* once connoted. This is not the time to analyze and criticize works of art. This is not the time to select the flowers of genius, differentiate between them, label and categorize. This is the time to accept what is offered and be thankful that something other than mass intolerance, mass suicide, can preoccupy the human intellect" (*Stand Still Like the Hummingbird* 32).

[10] The thread that Miller's mother notices on his coat is a thin fragment left from the web of Mona's stories. D. H. Lawrence, in his "Sorrow," connects smoke from a cigarette with the grey hairs of his mother which he finds on his coat and then watches "float up the dark chimney."

[11] In an interview with Miller, Cott discusses his relationship with women: ". . . Anaïs Nin has said that in *Tropic of Cancer* you seemed to be fighting off the idea of Woman because there was a woman inside of you whom you couldn't accept."

Miller responds: "It was my mother . . . whom I couldn't accept. . . . We never got along—never. Not till her dying day. And even then we were still enemies. Even then she was berating me and treating me like a child. And I couldn't stand it. And I grabbed her and pushed her back on the pillow. And then I realized the brutality of it—I didn't hurt her—but the very thought of doing this to such a woman! And then I went out to the hall and sobbed and wept" (Cott 157-58).

Perhaps his inability to accept his mother leads to the same trouble with Mona. He cannot accept the reality of Mona because he cannot see her as the complete woman that his mother never was.

[12] The Devachan of Miller's dream-piece resembles Thoreau's dream—Walden. The similarity goes beyond wishes for peace to the fact that both men's dreams were unrealized.

[13] In *The Cosmological Eye*, Miller writes: "My aim, in writing, is to establish a greater REALITY. I am not a realist or naturalist; I am for life, which in literature, it seems to me, can only be attained by the use of dream and symbol" (cited in Hassan 34).

Conclusion

As a man, Miller needs to be free, to love, and to come to terms with an imperfect world. As an artist he needs to communicate and to create an illusion, so as to be able to accept reality. In the world of his time, he could not be free to love and express himself as he wished. Two ways out of these restraints were Emma Goldman's anarchism—destruction is necessary for creation and existing bonds must be broken—and a necessary concomitant to that: "Imagination is the voice of daring. If there is anything God-like about God it is that. He dared to imagine everything" (*Sexus* 431). Miller believed that the greatest art is life itself. One must be able to imagine a better state in order to have the impetus to break existing chains.

Communication, important for ideas and art, is a significant part of the essential—"love." Communication with words, tears, eyes, mouth leads to growth and understanding, appreciation, and acceptance. " 'I'll eat anything,' I said. 'I'm not hungry, I'm exalted. I just want to show you how I feel. *Don't you ever get this way?*' " (*Sexus* 578).

Miller wants to accept and enjoy all of the world; he wants to arrive at *agape*. Sometimes he comes closer than at other times. He has an idea about how things should be and feels that others ought to feel the same way. He becomes frustrated and cannot see beyond the juxtapositions

of life because he cannot understand that they are "themselves," and he is "himself." His maturity allows him to accept the divergence of the populace and he wants others to join in his newfound joy in emotional liberty. Now his anarchism serves to improve the lives of those he loves, not to push them away. No longer must he break the bonds of existing love to find his own voice, for he has found it in his writing. As early as *Sexus*, he can express his love for Rebecca, a friend who understands him during his times of confusion:

> "*You like* . . . ! That's you all over. It's wonderful to hear it. You make me hungry too. You like everything, yes . . . but you don't love."
>
> "I do too. I love food, wine, women. Of course I do. What makes you think I don't? If you like, you love. Love is only the superlative degree. I love like God loves—without distinction of time, place, race, color, sex and so forth. I love you too—that way. It's enough, I suppose?"
>
> "It's too much, you mean. You're out of focus. Listen, calm down a moment. Carve the meat, will you? I'll fix the gravy."
>
> "Gravy . . . ooh, ooh. I *love* gravy."
>
> "Like you love your wife and me and Mona, is that it?"
>
> "*More* even. Right now it's all gravy. I could lick it up by the ladleful. Rich, thick, heavy, black gravy . . . it's wonderful." (*Sexus* 492-93)

True love cannot exist with barriers. Miller must be tested, and

test the world, prove his independence and his strength, before he can again become vulnerable to love.

> I sprang up suddenly my eyes full of tears, and I put my arms around her. "Now I can tell you honestly and sincerely," I said, "that I love you." I made no attempt to kiss her—I just embraced her. I released her of my own accord, sat down, picked up the glass of wine and finished it off. (*Sexus* 496)

This is to Rebecca again; he convinces us, as he seems to want to convince himself, that this is a non-sexual love.

> "You're an actor," she said. "In the real sense of the word, of course. . . ."
> ". . . I get frightened myself sometimes. Especially if the other person responds. I don't know where the proper limits are. There are no limits, I suppose. Nothing would be bad or ugly or evil —if we really let ourselves go. . . . that's the difference between the world of imagination and the world of common sense, which isn't common sense at all but sheer buggery and insanity. . . ." (*Sexus* 496-97)

Unlike less sensitive people, Miller cannot ignore or bypass the barriers. Sensitive men may be artists as a profession or only in their personal lives—like the Happy Man. Those who devote themselves to

art create images by which others may live.[1] Mitchell discusses the place of the artist in society:

> . . . unlikely as it might appear, Plato's and Miller's views of the nature of the poet, and his role vis à vis society, are almost identical. The only difference between them is that . . . . While Plato argues for rule by philosophers, Miller insists on rule by artists . . . . 'To unite man with man and peoples with peoples is not the work of politicians or of social reformers; men are united only through illumination. The true poet is an awakener; he does not promise bread and jobs. . . . All ideas of government fail insofar as they exclude the poet and the seer who are one.' (Mitchell 156)

Miller creates images which communicate escape from reality through love. In "Love and How It Gets That Way," he preaches:

> What more can one ask for than to be swallowed up in this tidal wave of Love, to go down defeated as a man and be born again a lover—a lover of man, a lover of woman, a lover of all God's creatures large or small? . . . Let us waste no time about the meaning of existence, even if it be love itself. "Walk on!" That is the clue to past and future. Love, however you can, however you must. Fear not that it be an imperfect love. Just love! (Dick 76)

Contradictions of reality do not apply to the moments described in the tableaux; neither do the contradictions of realism apply to the images themselves—which are complete and sincere. Nothing is static, and we can never know the truth. With art we suspend our uncertainty and disbelief, and if the work is a sincere representation of the artist, we believe what we behold. Miller changes his opinion about the persons and places he has described, but once he creates a tableau he never returns to alter its value. His emotions are powerful, as well as his imagery. The scenes about the bonds of humanity remain in relief because he does not wear away their power by analysis. Is that the secret of analysis—to reduce our emotions to comprehensible elements by first wearing away their power in the telling and retelling? This is a major difference between the use of analysis and the use of literature for the healing of emotional wounds.[2]

In his introduction to Mathieu's *Orpheus in Brooklyn,* Fowlie discusses the artist's perspective. Miller, as a literary descendant of Rimbaud and Orpheus, "... inherited from them the will to break with the world in order to recreate it" (xi). Fowlie elaborates:

> The poet's descent into hell (or into the subconscious or into the waste land of his own day) represents the indispensable mortifications he must undergo in order to rise above them into some kind of reunion with what is transcendant and luminous. The writer's role, when he is close to the role of the *vates,* is to reintegrate into the world something that was missing in his own time, whether he be in Charleville or Brooklyn or Delphi. (xii)[3]

What Miller brings to his readers is an enjoyment of life and an acceptance of love. He communicates images of love with talk and, paradoxically, with the stillness of the tableaux. He has suffered with the rest of humanity, but he reworks his painful experiences into positive energy. To Miller, love and its expression are dwindling in society and not fulfilling their essential role: "Have we more than a dozen heroes and heroines of love to hold up as examples? I doubt if we have even as many great lovers as we have illustrious saints" (*Sexus* 405). His reverence for love is more eloquent than words: "Woof!"—when he needs love most, and silence when he feels love most—in tableaux.

The spirit derived from Goldman's anarchism allows Miller to reach beyond the constraints of the modern intellectual community to an appreciation of the grandest and simplest in life. "When man begins to permit himself full expression, when he can express himself without fear of ridicule, ostracism or persecution, the first thing he will do will be to pour out his love" (*Sexus* 405). Miller becomes the writer who sees beyond ideology, to the connection between emotion and motion, divine and primitive, essential and luxurious, art and love, to a celebration of life beyond words. If an energy and plasticity is possible in language that can carry us to this conclusion, then all else is possible.

Love and sex become an integral part of life; maturity enables one to assimilate them, but Miller enjoys them and celebrates them. He brings the reader back to an earlier age—medieval—when feelings were less often analyzed than openly expressed and demonstrated. Nin acknowledges the advantage to Miller's optimistic immediacy: "The humiliations and defeats, given with a primitive honesty, end not in frustration, despair, or futility, but in hunger, an ecstatic, devouring hunger—*for more life*" (*TCan* xxx).

Miller often uses physical images to describe emotional and intellectual concepts: "By the time I meet the second ideal—Una Gifford—I am already diseased. Only fifteen years of age and the canker is gnawing at my vitals" (*Sexus* 210) and "I had a need for her which was never answered, and that need was like a wound which grew and grew until it became a gaping hole. As life went on, as that desperate need grew more intense, I dragged everything into the hole and murdered it" (*Sexus* 211).

When a wound is deep, consciousness is lost from lack of blood and time is needed for recovery. Miller's journey back to happiness follows the pattern of physiological illness. The physical elements of life move him when all else fails: the death of Mona's father, the sobbing that reduces him to ashes, the sight of his daughter, and, of course, what he is best known for—the female body.

> But these filthy beggars lying in the rain, what purpose do they serve? What good can they do us? They make us bleed for five minutes, that's all.
>
> Oh, well, these are night thoughts produced by walking in the rain after two thousand years of Christianity. (*TCan* 218)

Art, like primitive religions and ancient myths, makes the unknown known, the unseen seen, the unconscious conscious, the spiritual physical, and the mundane exalted. In the Sufi dances, banal movements are repeated and emotions are revealed, so that physical begets spiritual and primitive begets sublime.

Through his work, Miller matures into a great artist and transforms the ordinary into the exhilarating. "Miller goes out so completely into

life that he tends to deform it by his excessive love. He can teach us to see the miraculous in the obscene" (Durrell in *Happy Rock* 3). This is not wholly surprising, since paradox seems to animate most religions. That Miller's "pornography" is also a kind of "theology" reminds us that religious sacraments typically combine the taboo-vile and the taboo-sublime, as when Holy Communion makes a eucharistic symbol of union out of what may seem to be an act of cannibalism.

More direct Christian elements appear in his work but as fragile scaffolding rather than as firm foundation. Their sparsity makes their mere appearance seem ironic. Other beliefs are mentioned haphazardly but Christian symbols are used as structure. As the flimsy, outer integument of a nearly amorphous creature; perhaps they merely represent Miller's acquiescence to a tradition he was born into, but never became a strict follower of. As with other societal conventions, he takes part in ceremonies but does not follow rules; he marries but is not faithful and works but disobeys the boss.

Mona makes her life a mystery to Henry. Her name backwards is *anom* which suggests *no name*. Miller has been wounded by the unknown, the unspecific, the incomprehensible, but people are the implied culprits. Mona and Miller embody the primitive and the divine. Mona, the unknown weaver, is the divine goddess to Miller's working-class "miller." She is a mercenary peddler of poems to his romantic artist.

Miller's acceptance and celebration of life may facilitate a refusal to ever again endow only one love with divinity. He begins his time of love for women in a romantic surge:

> I was in love, with love. To love! To surrender absolutely, to prostrate oneself before the divine image, to die a thousand imaginary deaths, to

> annihilate every trace of self, to find the universe embodied and enshrined in the living image of another! Adolescent we say. Rot! This is the germ of the future life, the seed which we hide away, which we bury deep within us, which we smother and stifle and do our utmost to destroy as we advance from one experience to another and flutter and flounder and lose our way. (*Sexus* 210)

From this youthful vision of devotion to a goddess, Miller advances to complicated and real relationships. His love for Mona brings him back to romance, but life's peculiarities bring him, finally, to conclude that love can be found in all and perfection cannot be expected from any.

In his story of the rosy crucifixion, Miller is the Christ figure. Shattered by the separation from Mona, and thereby convinced of the imperfections of man—he is wounded. Like Christ he comes back to walk among men and to help them bear their suffering. Miller feels a kinship for the Jews, but does not, can not, formally become one. While he walks the streets, he is the wandering Jew—Christ.

Again in his introduction to Mathieu's book, Fowlie writes: "Bertrand Mathieu persuasively leads his readers to a realization that Rimbaud and Henry Miller are two of those rare visionaries and prophets who manage to communicate with God without passing through the temple" (xii). Karl Shapiro also recognizes Miller as a secular, yet divinely inspired, seer:

> If one had to type him one might call him a Wisdom writer, Wisdom literature being a type of literature which lies between literature and

> scripture; it is poetry only because it rises above literature and because it sometimes ends up in bibles. (*TCan* v)[4]

Acceptance and surrender, both the easiest and most difficult, are also both the lowliest and most noble. Only a thin membrane exists between the secular and the divine, as in Dickinson's poems in which the commonest materials explain life's most complicated and heartrending events. By filling his writing with sexual scenes described in basic language, by telling of life at its crudest, he reveals its most divine elements. In Miller's writing man is man, woman is woman, he is himself. The boundaries between life and art, commonplace and divine, are weak.

Such near fusion of apparent opposites show up in the tableaux. The simplest look defines the immensity of emotion, and commonplace backgrounds witness divine scenes. In the meetings of Henry and Mona in the hotel lobby and on the dance floor this is quite evident. Only when one is most open and accepting, with no barriers against basic emotions, does one come close to that love which is divine. The *tableaux vivant* of the theater is a conventional representation of human emotion. These scenes, studied in their simplicity and revelation, retain the elementary universality which keeps them close to divine.

Two artists render grief: a statue of a woman clinging to her own body in the desperation of separation, a man showing by the hands which cover his face that there is something in him which cannot be hidden. Both subjects touch themselves for support, hide their pain from the world, try to control the energy of their emotion.[5] These are instincts of man. The artists have taken the step towards surrender,

acceptance, and love which Miller took: they have revealed the truth about humanity. In "Mother," he assumes the crying posture: ". . . filled . . . with a profound sadness. I sank to the ground and held my head in my hands" (184).

Miller is happy when he feels and when he senses emotion in others. He recounts the following experience with Ned, the brother of his friend Ulric:

> He rose to his feet, slipped an arm in mine, and gave me that charming klieg-light smile of his. His eyes were big and liquid; the eyelids were like chipped saucers. It was amazing what an illusion of warmth and understanding he could give. I wondered for a moment if I had underestimated him. Nobody should be spurned or rejected who gives even the illusion of feeling. How could I tell what struggles he had made and was still making perhaps to rise to the surface? What right had I to judge him—or anybody? (*Sexus* 577)

Miller nourishes the wonder and mystery of love, while he aspires to love without judgement.

He wants to transform life with love—turn it into a joyful and welcoming experience.

> Joy is like a river: it flows ceaselessly. It seems to me that this is the message which the clown is trying to convey to us, that we should participate through ceaseless flow and movement,

> that we should not stop to reflect, compare, analyze, possess, but flow on and through, endlessly, like music. This is the gift of surrender, and the clown makes it symbolically. It is for us to make it real. (*Smile* 47)

All trouble that can be passively overcome can be exchanged for joy.

Henry is filled with these ideas as he speaks to Ned after the marriage ceremony with Mona:

> You don't *feel* any more. You're just trying to protect yourself. Well I don't want to protect myself. I want to do foolish things, little things, ordinary things, anything and everything that would make a woman happy. Can you understand that? You, and Ulric too, thought it quite a joke, this love business. . . . What I feel for her is so damned big I don't know how to express it. (*Sexus* 575)

Modern man is alienated by his society; if Miller ruled, art and love would hold society together with an embrace so loose that humankind could be free. Kosinski writes of alienated man in *The Painted Bird*:

> It mattered little if one was mute; people did not understand one another anyway. They collided with or charmed one another, hugged or trampled one another, but everyone knew only himself. His emotions, memory, and senses divided

him from others as effectively as thick reeds
screen the mainstream from the muddy bank.
(*Painted Bird* 232)

Miller reaches out beyond tragedy to redemption. A positive force can be forged from the bonds of humanity. The repression by society of Miller's particular life, his clear perception of the losses we all feel, and his search to heal his particular wounds inspired him to reveal his emotions through art. The peace, an aspiration of his words, touches us. Not only does he dare to write about love as it *is*, but he does so genuinely and convincingly. Henry Miller, full of compassion for the human race, reminds us of our own humanity. He uses his craft to express ideas that may free his fellow men and women to know their own capacity for love and a generosity of spirit.

[1] Mitchell discusses the artist's reality: Miller "... asserts that 'the artist's dream of the impossible, the miraculous, is simply the resultant of his inability to adapt himself to reality.' ... we have here a statement very much like Blake's when he said that he did not see the sun, but rather a bright golden guinea. This part of Miller's view, then, is semiorthodox ... " (Mitchell 160).

Miller was interested in the welfare of his fellow artists. *The Happy Rock* cites him for performing a "... great service to the artist and to the world by writing his *Open Letters* begging for recognition and calling attention to the deplorable fact that society suffers by not supporting its artists adequately. *Open Letter* reprinted in *The Plight of the Creative Artist in the USA, 1944*" (*Happy Rock* 85).

[2] "He also shows, in peculiar fashion, the meaning of literature. It is not so far from an illustration of the old Aristotelian theory of Art as an emotional purge: though now we know that mere purgation is not enough: we have not only to get rid of the illusions: we have to recognise and appreciate what is genuinely excellent in ourselves" (Nicholas Moore in *Happy Rock* 151).

[3] Perhaps this is what Hassan is referring to also: "The powers of Dionysus, which civilization must repress, threaten at times to erupt with a vengeance. In the process, energy may overwhelm order; language may turn into a howl, a cackle, a terrible silence; form may be mangled as ruthlessly as the poor body of Orpheus was ... must not the head of the poet be severed in order that he may continue to sing? ... must not life overwhelm art periodically to insure the health, the prevalence of man? Must not words aspire to stillness?" (Hassan 18).

[4] The following is the entry for *Wisdom Literature* in Holman's *Handbook*: "Literature in which routine aesthetic values—plot, character, and so forth—are subordinate to the direct formulaic expression of moral wisdom and truth. Clearest in scripture like the Book of Proverbs and the *Bhagavad-Gita* but also present in some form in the writing of Samuel Johnson and D. H. Lawrence."

Miller copied the following relevant words of Jacob Boehme: "If I had no other book than only the book which I am myself so I have books enough. The whole Bible lies in me if I have Christ's spirit. If I read myself I read God's book and you my brothers are the alphabet which I read in myself, for my mind and will finds you within me. I wish from my heart you would also find me" (*Red Notebook* 24).

[5] The sculptures described can be found in the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D. C. The woman is the subject of *Le Petit Adieu* (1943) by Henri Laurens and the man is the subject of Kathe Kollwitz's *Grief* (1938).

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Henry Miller, born in New York near the turn of the century, who spent a busy decade in Europe, concentrated much of his prodigious energy on the fundamental challenge of telling the truth. Nothing looks easier, and nothing turns out to be more difficult.

Let us salute Amy Flaxman, who is also a New Yorker with experience in Europe, because with a sharp eye and a clear head, without presuppositions or prejudices or ulterior motives – she is the best reader of Miller's work.

William Harmon • James Gordon Hanes Professor • UNC - Chapel Hill

Amy M. Flaxman has come along and done a tremendous vivisection of Miller's libido and capacity for feeling. I had read Miller for the pure joy of his sexual escapades, but now his more sensitive and intellectual sides are revealed.

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